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**ADVENTURES BEYOND
THE ZAMBESI**

**OF THE O'FLAHERTY : THE
INSULAR MISS : THE SOLDIER
MAN: AND THE REBEL-WOMAN**

LAY OF THE IMPRISONED
HUNTSMAN

*I would I were as I have been,
Hunting the Hart in forests green,
With bended bow and blood-hound free,
Oh, that's the life for Joy and Me.*

WALTER SCOTT.



THE AUTHORESS

32304

ADVENTURES BEYOND THE ZAMBESI

OF THE O'FLAHERTY : THE
INSULAR MISS : THE SOLDIER
MAN : AND THE REBEL-WOMAN

BY

MRS. FRED MATURIN

[EDITH CECIL-PORCH]

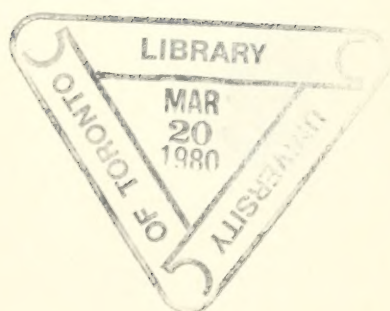
AUTHOR OF "PETRONEL OF PARADISE"
PETTICOAT PILGRIMS ON TREK" ETC

Africa
M.



LONDON
G. BELL AND SONS LTD.

1913



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351
M36

A DEDICATION SONG

I

*TO-DAY I stand and lay you, oh my Book,
At several shrines ; and first of all, I look
Into the face of one who, if you scan
These pages well, you'll find as " Soldier Man,"
For rifle and for gun he changed his sword
And led the way into the Unknown broad,
And oft with me this Book he did debate,
And so its pages I do dedicate
To my Soldier Man.*

II

*Reviewers Mine ! I own I want your praise,
And so I sweetly smile back at your gaze ;
Lords of Creation ! prithee don't be hard
Upon this Authoress and female Bard !
Just picture me ! Holding my breath I wait ;
Let me down easy ! Arbiters of my fate !
Gallant Reviewers Mine !*

III

*I next do sing my dedication song
To all who to my inferior sex belong,
But more especially to those, like me,
Who no inferiority in us do see.
I dedicate this Work to all I've met
In Womankind—but chiefly the Suffragette,
Dear Rebel-Woman !*

IV

*And now a Dedication last I make,
To one who in my work has got his stake ;
He sits (in day-dreams that have come to me)
And writes nice cheques running to figures three ;
Laurels are fine ! But give me first hard cash,
And " Pay to Bearer " signed thus—" Eveleigh Nash,"
My generous Publisher !*



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CHAPTER I

To see the world, to seek adventures, has appealed to me all my life. As a child I was almost obsessed by the idea. I devoured childish books of travel and adventure, and they were the only sort that appealed to me. Other little girls seemed content with the especial kind of literature designed and written for little girls at that period, works like "Queechy," "Daisy at Home," "Heir of Redcliffe," and "The Wide, Wide World." My contemporaries will be aware that in these the childish heroine is almost too good to live, and the feeling I got when I was made to peruse these volumes was that I really must be a kind of youthful female monstrosity, for I wanted to do none of the things that the young heroines of these tales did, and I loathed the mere idea of leading the goody-goody lives they led.

Nowadays I notice that girls are allowed to be tom-boys if such is their bent. There is nothing shocking in it, no reproach at all. Quite the contrary. But in the days of my childhood, if you were unhappy enough to be born a female, your soul was not supposed to soar above such joys as keeping a dickey-bird in a cage and feeding it with sugar and groundsel, and making woolwork slippers for your male relatives, and kettle-holders for the females, domestically inscribed "Tea is ready." If you wanted to stretch your limbs, climb trees, or make a noise out of the very joy of your youth and health, you were regarded as something entirely beyond the pale,

and your governess shook her head and told your grandmother, "I tremble for her future."

I fear, in short, that I have always been of the same clan as the hopeless young lady who asked her mother one interminable Sunday, "Before I decide whether I'll go to heaven or hell when I die, tell me—if I'm very good in heaven all the week will I be allowed to go down to hell on Saturday afternoons and play with the little devils?"

When I was given "The Wide, Wide World" as a birthday present I was enchanted—till I opened it. I was sure that at last, with such a title, my relatives had taken pity on me, and had given me a book I should devour.

"The Wide, Wide World"!!!

That was where I wanted to be! That was what I wanted to read about! The peaceful, sleepy old Sussex home in which those early years were spent faded away as I seized the volume, my head already full of blood-curdling travels and adventures, tussles with wild beasts, hunger, thirst, hardships, difficulties, dangers! All that was, to me, life. My joy was short-lived. And—low be it spoken—something like twenty years was to pass over my head before I was to again peruse that immortal work and appreciate its style, if not its ideas. At that time, after a glimpse inside, I described its young heroine to my brothers very impolitely but briefly, and I turned with relief to fiction more after my own heart.

"The Children of the New Forest," "The World of Ice," "The Voyage of the Sunbeam," "Swiss Family Robinson," and the works of Jules Verne were eagerly devoured by me, and I became a terror to my relations, because I was always running away from home and taking my two sisters and brothers with me, in order to find a life more to our tastes than the humdrum one which had fallen upon us.

Had I been a man I believe I should have become an

explorer and traveller, but being that imprisoned thing, a woman, I have only been able to indulge in my tastes from time to time.

For some years after my marriage I led the life of the usual military officer's wife, moving about with her husband's regiment, and I got a good deal of fun and adventure even like that. But the life of Society and its calls I was never really happy in—there was too much humbug about it; and when I later found myself in Africa there grew up in my heart a great longing to do "a trek" somewhere in that wonderful land of vast spaces and blue skies and the Unknown which stretches ever before you out there.

Two years running I tried to get up a party to accompany me on a trek into the wilds. Everything would look bright for a time; apparently every soul I knew wanted to come. We all met and settled everything and I would be full of hopes. Then one fell out: he had suddenly lost all his money. Then another; he had lost his head over a woman, and she would not let him go. Another had lost a lawsuit.

Others, again, had "found" things. One "found" that Jones was to be of the party: he loathed Jones and couldn't trek with him. Sleeping with Jones snoring in a bell-tent! Another had "found" that it was wrong to kill and eat animals; he had become a theosophist. Another had found a billet and was no longer at a loose end. Another had found a wife and therefore he could not come. But life is made up of losing and finding all alone the line. So much for the men.

Mrs. Anti-Progressive cried off when told, first, that I am a Progressive, and, second, that she could not take her French maid with her and have her complexion massaged every morning. Another woman decided that she could stand everything else except lions. Miss That couldn't face the idea of snakes wriggling under her tent door, and the

woman who appealed most to me said that of lions and leopards she had no fear. It was moths she could not contemplate. Those big fat furry moths that flop into your face. Those, and ear-wigs, had made her decide that there was only one place she could live in—London. And so it went on, and each time I had to give it up in despair.

But I never dropped the idea. I am quite sure now that what you really want to do in this life you will be able to do, if you only *want* hard enough and never stop wanting.

I met some one else who had been wanting the same thing all his life. My longed-for "trek" loomed up close at last.

CHAPTER II

I was always one of the rebels of my sex.

I know now that I was, as a child, in advance of my times, and, like all such, came hopelessly to grief and never could understand why. I was universally regarded as a kind of black sheep who must be kept well under, and whom only chastisement and imprisonment might possibly subdue. The idea, I observe, still prevails in regard to the woman in revolt, and is about as useful as it was with me. We women all have our different ways of breaking the laws we have not helped to make. Myself I don't attack property. Give Government the satisfaction of torturing me in prison? There are ideas you can attack which will give you freedom instead of a cell. Let women think them out and do them, obeying only that thing that never lies as to what is right or wrong—one's conscience.

From the time I could think at all I was indignant at the way my sex got "sat upon." When my brothers bullied me I "went" for them, and, even if I came out of it black and blue, I "went" for them again as hard as ever.

Yet I found boys more interesting than girls—as I often find men, because women have been kept so "down" that they must have an independent spirit and dare to think for themselves in order to be interesting at all. Too many are mere "pretty Pollies" in cages, repeating obediently the sentiments taught them by their Owners.

My mind, as a child, was ever full of indignant questions

concerning my own patient sex. Why were girls kept so "under"? Why might boys rush about and enjoy themselves, yell and shout, and go out of doors alone? That longing to "go out of doors alone" was typical of all my life since. Freedom! Freedom of action, freedom of choice, freedom of thought! These I needed and must have. A fierce resentment burned in me at the moral and physical captivity in which I and my sisters were reared. In these days it may sound incredible, but never once during my first fifteen years did I (by permission) breathe God's air except in the company of a miserable, downtrodden governess or servant, for whom, consequently, a violent aversion was conceived, though I expect they hated their dull lives as much as I did. My only happy, free times were when I periodically ran away, and so obstreperous did I become that I was banished to a convent abroad. In that establishment I expect startling records will be handed down for some generations, so eventful was my sojourn there. I almost infected the younger nuns with my ideas in general, and I ring-led the other pupils into every mischief and insubordination I could think of. Yet the dear nuns, God bless them, wept at my departure. Such are women!

So very early in life here was a Rebel-woman in embryo, and as soon as she had burst the bonds of the convent the sense of general injustice and moral captivity grew. Women seemed to be of such small account in the universe. Why was this? Why were we governed by men? Who had so decreed it? Certainly one saw that female beauty could subjugate that often fascinating being, man, in a marvellous way, but that seemed an empty and insecure reign! A brick on the top of your face on a windy day and off your throne you'd have to step. I saw plain men and elderly men still properly treated in spite of their years and physical defects, but I heard old maids, old women, and plain girls too often

sneered at, laughed at, and neglected all round, and one couldn't help reflecting that some day one would grow old oneself. Oh yes, something was hopelessly wrong. There seemed to be no real place *of their own* in the world for women.

We had an autocratic military father of the "old school." His ideas and treatment of us made matters worse, and my indignant heart fairly seethed with questions to which no one seemed able to give replies.

I married, and as life unrolled itself I saw clearly that the earth and its laws, including those matrimonial, were, in truth, run by men for men. No woman had apparently been consulted about anything, no matter how closely it affected her life! The laws were, some of them, monuments of injustice to women, and most women took it all "lying down."

I never did.

I have obeyed such laws and customs as have appealed to my sense of justice (which is fairly keen and true, I think), and those that have not so appealed I have defied, and I know many of my sex will do so until the voice of Woman, calling so long and patiently at the door, is attended to and she assists in the rulings so vitally affecting her life.

It may therefore easily be imagined that such an Outlaw as myself has never troubled her head very much over Mrs. Grundy. The poor old soul is an arch-hypocrite, and I shall be glad to hear she is dead and buried and something truer and better in womanhood risen in her stead. It is not what you do that she minds one bit, only how well or badly you do it.

One day, in the summer of 1909, and after not meeting for seven years, Chance, Karma, Fate, Destiny, as you like to read it, led my steps to the "Soldier Man" of this narrative, now—three years later—my husband, but then only a friend.

We had first met beneath an African sun, under Majuba

Hill, but almost before we had grown to know each other his regiment carried him one way and my quest of adventure the other.

We met once more after seven summers in a country house in England.

I was free, as I had been for twelve years, to go where I liked and do what I liked.

No one wanted me. I appeared to be necessary to hardly anyone's happiness. It was a lonely feeling and had hurt once, and I had tried, in my very loneliness, to alter it. Rebel-woman though I was, to be loved, appreciated, and wanted meant all the world to me once.

But that was over for the time being, and my whole mood was now to sing through life :

*I care for nobody, no, not I,
And nobody cares for me.*

It is not at all an unhappy state—*faute de mieux* !

And so destiny worked itself out, and we of this true tale blindly obeyed it, all four of us.

We were all four on the way to meet each other that summer.

First, Cecil came along—"Soldier Man" of this story. It seemed quite natural to meet. He had never felt to me quite like a stranger ; nor I to him. It was, even under Majuba, like meeting again after centuries of not having met. There is nothing more perfect than true friendship between man and woman. Perfect equality—he superior in some ways, she in others, and each glad and willing to learn from the other. It might be the same with nations, could men but see it ! And some day they will.

That summer I was living in a gipsy caravan and travelling through the New Forest and along the south coast of

England. I was so happy, so untrammelled, I could, and would, have so dwelt for ever but for the murky, dull English winter coming on.

Cecil was under canvas with his regiment on the south coast, and came to trek with us when he could get away. It was this life that bred the idea of another trek somewhere. How could one ever live in rooms again? We used to sit in a forest dell and read "Omar Khayyám," and my heart would leap at the lovely lines :

*The stars are setting,
And the caravan
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing ;
Oh, make haste !*

Oh yes, I wanted to make haste. I wanted to be out under God's "blue tent." A long flight for liberty and air, blue sky and space ! And so it all gradually grew.

Things that are worth while, grow slowly.

I told him one day that I meant to leave England soon, and he said he longed to come too.

The call of the Wild. It was calling us both. Sport and Nature had ever been his chief delights. He, too, longed to "spread himself out." His profession, the army, he felt cramped him.

A flight for air and liberty ! . . . The idea, first a dream, then a conversation, then a hope, then a real sweet shape—it grew, and it grew, till we knew we meant to do it.

We decided to take friends if they could be found, partly for companionship, partly to help us in expenses, partly for safety in case of accidents.

Should it be Cashmere ? The Yukon ? New Zealand ? British Columbia ? The South Sea Islands ? The North or South Pole ?

I was ready for any one of them, but he is soberer than

I, and when I arrived at the North Pole he shook his head and said, "Easy!"

In the end we decided on Africa, because we both of us knew the land and liked it.

"And now," said I, a month later, seated on the steps of my caravan, facing the Solent, one lovely still August afternoon, "let us write out an advertisement for other people to accompany us."

"What sort of people would you say?" he asked, pondering. "They, of course, should be like ourselves?—unconventional?"

"Much more fun if they are prim," I replied, "provided they'll come and put up with the roughing. It is so nice to see people's minds enlarging."

"We can't well advertise that we want to see some minds enlarging, but I think we can leave it to chance. It is quite certain that life beyond the Zambesi, from all I've heard, would enlarge the mind of—of——"

"An Anti-Suffragette," I suggested, and we started to write out our advertisement.

We spoilt a good deal of paper. The sheets lay all round the caravan steps. And we nearly quarrelled.

When darkness fell, and the lights on the Isle of Wight twinkled redly across the calm water, we had still not decided how to make our requirements known to the public.

Cecil's regimental camp was spread out (a flat plain of little white bell-tents and misty lights shining through them) only a mile away.

"You leave it to me," said he; "I am not bad at this kind of thing when I can do it alone. . . . After mess in my tent I'll draw something out and bring it to you in the morning."

CHAPTER III

WE had decided that another woman and another man would be sufficient to complete our party.

The Soldier Man wrote out and next morning brought me an advertisement for the *Field*, somewhat ambiguously worded thus :

“ Officer Regular Army with own trek wagon and team of donkeys desires to find others to join him on a trek in Africa,” &c. . . .

We had decided at that time to buy a trek wagon and donkeys.

“ But,” said I, as he handed me the above with a modest look (remarking, “ I think that embodies it all ? ”)—“ but— isn’t this rather *rude* ? ‘ Officer with team of donkeys desires to find *others* ’ ? ”

“ Oh,” said he, staring at the thing, “ of . . . course—other donkeys. Oh, by Jove ! wonder if I’d have got any replies ? ”

And so we altered it into politer form and it left for the *Field*.

Amongst our own friends not a soul seemed to have the money or else the time to join us on our trek. There was really nothing for it but to advertise.

We got many replies, but none very suitable at first. We met people at their clubs and places, but decided none of them would do. They all wanted so much—were not happy-go-lucky enough.

One woman desired to know were we all Church of England ?
High or Low ? This didn't go with a trek

*Somewheres east of Suez, where
The best is like the worst,
And there ain't no ten commandments,
And a man may raise a thirst.*

And when she followed it up by saying she could not consent to travel on the Sabbath, not even if we had landed up against a den of lions, we felt inclined to advise her to tour round in England in a Bible caravan, but not to dream of treks like ours. I would still have taken her, but the Soldier Man decided it might prove too turbulent.

Yet I don't think any of the four of us who eventually travelled together were very wicked or godless. Cecil and I are both students of theosophy and find much happiness in it. The O'Flaherty, our second man, is a Roman Catholic, and tries to be good, even if he doesn't, like ourselves, always succeed. "The Insular Miss," our second lady, was very orthodox certainly, believed in the things she had been taught (whether true or not), but had travelled enough to have learnt not to expect every one else to do the same. I christened her the "Insular Miss"; she was so convinced that England was the Be-all and End-all of the earth.

We met in London—she and I—at the Army and Navy Stores—and sat on a velvet sofa in the entrance and discussed things. She had a pleasant face, pretty blue eyes, was about thirty-five, and her Christian name was Britannia.

"I go somewhere every year," said she; "it enlarges one's mind."

"A very good plan," said I, remembering our conversation. "Where have you been?"

"To Scotland, to Wales, to Norway, to Switzerland."

"Travelling in those countries is comfortable. Will you

be able to face the rough and tumble of Central Africa, with all its dangers and risks ? ”

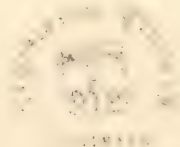
“ Oh, I think so. I am very strong. I play golf on Wimbledon Common and I’m a good walker. I wish to see Central Africa, but I suppose the climate will be all right ? The one thing I could *not* stand would be to . . . to lay my bones in any land except England. I regard these outlandish countries as necessary—well, as almost evils . . . lesson-books, so to speak, to be studied in order to improve one’s mind, and show one how blessed we are to have been born and reared in this favoured and Christian land of England.”

I pondered on the general uproar so constantly going on in England—queer Parliaments ; strange Ministers ; bad, tyrannical laws ; strikes ; woman and child sweating ; oppression of the poor, and mal-treatment of the women who are up against all this—and I wondered, could she be an Anti-Suffragette ?

I decided to leave that question to be unravelled in the wilds of Central Africa, when its pros and cons could be discussed calmly, aided by the perspectives of distance and peace.

She would, anyhow, do very nicely for our trek, would my “ Insular Miss.” We would meet again when our plans and destination were more settled.

For some time we were undecided whether to go to Johannesburg and there invest in our wagon and donkeys. We had set out hearts on donkeys because some one asked us, as an argument in their favour, had any one *ever* seen a dead donkey ? No one had, so we hoped that the donkeys at present on the face of the globe may have been born soon after the Flood and were endowed with life everlasting. Nothing better for a trek in Africa could be imagined. We proposed, therefore, to start from Johannesburg and make for Pietersburg and thence to the Limpopo (Crocodile) River and beyond into Southern Rhodesia. The shooting upon



this route is excellent, and we were told we should sell the wagon and donkeys at the end of our trek for more than we gave for them. I shall always be sorry that, for economy, we did not do the Limpopo trek.

Upon consulting sportsmen and friends, however, we eventually decided, after much discussion, to rail from Cape Town to Livingstone and start our trek from the far side of the Zambesi River into the very little known wilds beyond.

Our two friends were agreeable to go wherever we went.

When our plans were eventually decided on, we started "mobilizing," as the Soldier Man calls it, for it was now April and we wished to reach Livingstone by June, so as to get as much of the fine cold weather as possible for our travels, to say nothing of the shooting, which is best when the great Rhodesian grass plains have been burnt down in June and July and you can then see the game.

We went for nearly all our camp-kit to a practical man near London Bridge, one of the most reliable tent-makers in the world, I should imagine. Days and days were spent choosing our tents, canteens, beds, chairs, lamps, mosquito-curtains, and other camp equipment, and it was all great fun.

The O'Flaherty, a jovial, blue-eyed young Irishman, came up to town in his motor and spent a day with us ordering all he wanted.

The Insular Miss found, at the last, that she could not get off as soon as we could, so it was decided that she should follow, and we all, except the O'Flaherty, had a farewell lunch at the Ritz a few days before we sailed; and as "the Miss" drove away in her taxi after, we said "Good-bye till we meet in the Wilderness."

Upon May 7, 1910, we—the Soldier Man, the O'Flaherty, and I—sailed from England for Cape Town in the s.s. *Buluwayo*, Bucknall Line, a splendid little vessel with cabins like large rooms and big square windows instead of ports.

Voyages are all much alike—the same flirtations, the same theatricals got up, the same little scandals—but this was the only voyage I have ever made where not one quarrel took place. We were a happy party, no one was unkind or ill-natured, and when we all landed at Cape Town (the O’Flaherty having had a good try at “painting the ship red” the previous night, and all but threw two passengers into the sea off the top of the canvas awning, where, at 2 A.M., they somehow found themselves) it was with real regret we said good-bye to some of the friends we had made on board.

One dear little boy I shall always remember. He took a great fancy to the Soldier Man and me, and every night I would find upon my pillow a little love-letter addressed to “dear Princess Plantagenet,” a name I received on board when comparing family trees. The wondrous things I was to send that child from Central Africa ! His last shout to me as we bade him farewell at Cape Town was, “Don’t forget my baby zebra and my little rhinoceros, and the ostrich chicks and the lion cubs ! ”

The winter rains were on when we reached Cape Town, and we none of us took a fancy to the place, a rather unfair judgment to form in four days of drizzle, when the tablecloth on Table Mountain never lifted once, and we slushed up and down Adderley Street buying limbo (calico—coinage where we were going), fishing tackle, homœopathic medicines, books, notepaper, groceries, and a hundred and one other things forgotten in London. Later, we loved Cape Town.

Our real trek-groceries we had ordered in London, and they (in chop boxes), with the guns, ammunition, tents, camp furniture, &c., had all left England long before we did and were, we hoped, now awaiting us at Livingstone.

On the fourth day after our arrival at Cape Town we left for Rhodesia—Cecil, the O’Flaherty, myself, and Jane.

Jane was my dog. She had been Cecil’s. She was a dear

little black Aberdeen terrier, with the sweetest face and nature the Almighty ever gave a dog. On board ship she was the pet of every one and I loved her dearly.

For five days and nights we journeyed in the train, but never felt dull. It was all delightful.

The rumour had somehow got round that we were the "shooting party for up-country," and every one wanted to be friendly and give us advice. The appalling stories we got about man-eating lions, deadly snakes, cannibal tribes, and blackwater fever would, I think, have frightened some women out of their wits. I felt distinctly nervous, but it added to the excitement.

The O'Flaherty, Soldier Man, and I shared the same carriage by day, and once had to by night, and it was not very comfortable, especially when the O'Flaherty sat down flat on my face as he prepared to climb into his berth. (I think he'd been in the refreshment-car.)

We stopped one night at Buluwayo, and the O'Flaherty was set upon, robbed, and all but murdered in the streets of that delectable city, returning to the hotel from some carouse or other.

He was going to "confession" next morning, because he felt it was probably his last chance of getting absolved from his manifold sins for some months to come.

"I may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb," said he, when he had obtained the address of a *padre* of his own faith and made an appointment for early next morning before our train should start for Livingstone, "and I think I'll have a bust and throw it all in together! I sha'n't have another chance for ages."

It struck me as most convenient, this kind of religion. I don't know what the "bust" consisted of, for I was soundly asleep in bed, but next morning the O'Flaherty could not go to confession; his eyes were so swollen, black and disfigured,

and he had to get into the train and enter the land of Livingstone with his crimes unconfessed—but I hope, all the same, not unforgiven.

We travelled all day and all night, our train running through vast forests unknown of man for the greater part. Game was now and then seen for the first time, and great was the excitement of Cecil and the O'Flaherty, who lay on the seat with ice on his brow, but raised himself occasionally to look forth out of swollen orbs half-closed, and murmur "Jupiter Ammon!" and then go to sleep again. Men's "busts" always seem to end like this.

At wayside stations, tiny lonely spots, queer natives trooped down to see us pass, and sold us gourds of delicious milk and strange wooden animals and little fat chairs made out of one piece of wood. We felt we were getting near the Edge of Beyond, and the strange creatures in it, when we gave threepences for spotted giraffes and panthers, fat black elephants with white tusks and flat ears, lions, hyenas, rhino, and hippo; also speckled wooden guinea-fowl the same size as the elephants.

Night descended on us still humming through the trackless forests, first trod long ago by tired, splendid Livingstone and his followers, and we were all asleep at dawn next morning when a great distant roar mingled itself into my dreams, and the O'Flaherty, in pyjamas, bawled into my sleepy ear, "The Victoria Falls!"

CHAPTER IV

I RUSHED out on to the platform at the rear of the train to try to see the Falls. We were now roaring over the great Zambesi Bridge, which spans Southern with Northern Rhodesia. One got a flashing glimpse of the Falls, but only that. Then the train passed through the "Rain Forest." It never ceases to rain there, and the thunder of the Falls, hidden somewhere behind the dripping woodland, told us how close they were, but we speeded on.

Soon our long, long sea and land journey had deposited us at our first goal—Livingstone platform. We stood and looked round at the queer, tropical, pretty little place, half on a wooded hill, half in the valley. We felt we were indeed at the very end of the civilized world here! A sleepy, cool, white hotel all on one story met our eyes, with broad and shady verandas overlooking the police lines below, a few funny-looking little stores selling everything from matches to ladies' helmets and every single thing at truly fearful prices, such as eightpence for a penny bottle of ink, and all else in proportion.

The chief store belongs to a Mr. C., "a very good fellow," says every one, and he was very nice to us, as also was Mrs. C.

We settled to stop a month or so under canvas in Livingstone or at the Falls; as, first, the grass had not been burnt yet up-country, and, secondly, before we could start on our trek a quantity of things had still to be got while we were

in the neighbourhood of shops. It is quite astonishing what a mass of "things" you find you need when you are going into the heart of the wilds. Half of every day Cecil spent at Mr. C.'s store laying in more groceries, potatoes, onions, cooking-pots, salt (which is money where we were going), helmets, clothes, notepaper, and many other effects.

The O'Flaherty patronized the local club a lot and appeared to rather shock the good people by rushing into it garbed in his trek-kit, into which, in his enthusiasm, he insisted on getting the moment we arrived. Khakee "shorts" four inches long, a mud-coloured shirt minus collar, and naked legs up to the shorts, produced symptoms in Livingstone society nearly as severe as you would get if the same apparition burst upon the dwellers 'neath the sacred shades of an English cathedral-town.

In vain did the dignified Soldier Man remonstrate.

"Don't you fret yourself, old chap," said our friend, "they look on us *all* as sort of beyond the pale, don't you know, so I may as well live up to the character. Mrs. Suff. here is discussed with bated breath 'travelling alone with two men,' much as you'd say 'with two murderers.'"

"I don't mind!" said I, lying in a long chair in the Hotel veranda; "it must be dull in this Back of Beyond, and we come as a breath from the outer earth. Did you tell them that I'm a Suffragette?"

"I did. And the Mayor considers that the post office letter-box should be patrolled day and night, the police informed, and the shop windows barricaded."

"Now," said I. "I understand why, when I went to the store for a hammer to take into camp, every one looked so alarmed."

We spent a couple of days at the hotel and then moved into camp down the valley, and our tent doors we pitched to

face the distant "Five Fingers" rising night and day over the forest, the five great columns of spray from the Falls, which we intended to visit later on.

The climate was delightful, and remained so now for months on end. Cloudless blue and golden days, not too hot and not too cold, yet at night quite cold enough to be glad to gather round a roaring log fire for our dinner and to enjoy thick blankets on one's bed. Before we came into camp we engaged servants. First came a cook called "Jonas," and he followed our fortunes throughout our travels. Two table-boys—"Big Ben" (a great fat fellow) and "Mischief"—followed, but the latter we eventually got rid of before we started, for he was true to his name, was always giving trouble, and we were told we should easily find another at Magoy, our real trek starting-point, some hundreds of miles up the line. In addition to these servants, Cecil engaged a head-man, interpreter, and body-servant all in one. His name was "Hymn-Book," and he was, like our other servants, a Tanganyika boy. He spoke English well, was a Christian (which, if anything, rather set us against him), dressed in shabby European clothes instead of the uniform we made our other domestics wear, and his duties were to look after the Soldier Man's tent, clothes, bath, &c., "boss up" the other servants, settle all disputes and drive bargains, interpret the various lingoes we came across (and their name was legion), and, when on trek, be responsible for the carriers, their number and good behaviour, see that none ran away, superintend the curing of skins and horns, see to the pitching and unpitching of the tents, and various other duties of a responsible nature. His wages were £3 a month, and, taking it all round, he was worth it—for a trek and a moving life. As a house servant he would have been of little use. He had spent his life with different masters on shooting and trading trips, had many marvellous and no doubt true stories to

tell, and it had become the only life he was fit for. The same may be said of all our other servants.

Jonas and Big Ben followed, and a second table-boy, "Early To-morrow Morning," who replaced "Mischief"; a third table-boy was to be got at Magoy; they had also led the same nomad existence, and one and all were agog to be off and on the move again.

We led a happy life in our pretty Livingstone camp, and talked of very little else than our coming travels. The two men spent a lot of time cleaning and pottering over their different guns and rifles, peering through the barrels and passing ragged old vests and bits of cloth down them by aid of a stick, talking meanwhile, as they sat outside their tents in the delicious air and sun, of all they would do and all they had already done in their lives in the shooting line. The O'Flaherty's yarns were astonishing.

At Cape Town the Soldier Man had presented me with a lovely little B.S.A. rifle, light to carry and very dainty in shape. We made a target, fastened it to a tree, and often amused ourselves practising at it, and I was much elated at being told I ought to soon become an excellent shot.

The domestic staff seemed to have a pleasant time of it not too far from our camp—near enough to enable a shout to bring them running. In a small grove of shady trees was located the camp kitchen, its centrepiece a large wood fire over which, in many marvellous ways, Jonas cooked us joints, steaks, birds, vegetables, and puddings. An everlasting ring of natives (all apparently "brudders" of some one or other of the servants) squatted by day and a good part of the night round this fire, chattering nineteen to the dozen. We would hear Hymn-Book informing them of many items of news about us which we hadn't till then known ourselves: how the Soldier Man was a big prince in his own country and very rich; how I also came of Royal blood, and the turquoise

ring on my finger would buy up Luanika, the King of Northern Rhodesia, and all his belongings. The O'Flaherty, having brought a medicine-chest with him, was a very great "medicine man," who could kill or cure you in an instant as he chose.

Whenever we had occasion to walk past our "kitchen" all these camp hangers-on would kneel as we passed and clap their hands, a mark of great respect. The women placed their forefingers in their mouths and made a strange, far-sounding, trilling noise like a hundred pea-whistles going at once.

But now we were longing to see the Zambesi and its Falls, and after three weeks at Livingstone, all our business there being finished, we decided to strike camp, get carriers, and spend our last fortnight before starting on our trek under canvas as near the Victoria Falls as we could get.

We were glad to leave Livingstone, and should only be returning to it for a day or two before leaving for Magoy.

Cecil had seen some official in the offices of the Administration, and had arranged for fifty carriers of the Mashakalumbwe tribe to be duly engaged for our travels at Magoy, a tiny benighted place in the bush, twenty-four hours' railway journey up the Cape-to-Cairo line. It appeared that the Native Commissioner up there was a son of an old friend of my family's—Mr. Hugh, whose very name felt like home—and I was delighted to hear it and got a kind letter from him saying how he was longing for our arrival, and he would put us up and "had not seen a white woman for two years." I immediately decided upon what dress and hat I would wear when bursting upon his vision, for of course it was a solemn duty to gladden the eyes of so lonely a man as this. The kit I did eventually appear in Magoy in—but never mind, that is coming.

How money flies in Livingstone! To all shooting-parties

and travellers (barring the Duke of Westminster) I emphatically say, "Stay as short a time at Livingstone as possible if you don't want to be ruined." I have lived in expensive spots, but never one to touch Livingstone: there, the commonest, pettiest needs of life became luxuries. You dreaded to go into a store. Long before we left the place we were learning economy upon lines never known before. Even pieces of old newspapers were treasured, to roll things up in. Oranges were 1s. each, bread 1s. or 1s. 6d. a loaf, meat something awful. Quite a few groceries for a week, such as a pound of sugar, butter, bacon, jam, &c., and one found one had ordered £5 worth! Every one in Livingstone is bent on making a fortune quickly and clearing out before they die of the climate, which in the hot weather is bad.

We went several times in a little trolley to the banks of the Zambesi, about five miles away, a most lovely river dotted with palm-grown islands. The little trolley-line runs through thick forest, very pretty. At one place we got off and went to call on a man living near, and took turns to nurse and fondle a baby leopard he had tamed and kept in his garden. These things made one aware that we were now on the very edge of the wilds and big-game country. At Livingstone, the butcher kept, in his back yard, a half-grown lion which, when you went to pat and coax it, gave a playful roar which shook the earth, and sprang at you, "to have a game," the butcher explained, standing sharpening his knife behind you. When you retreated terrified, and devoutly thankful that the darling was on a thick cable chain, the friendly butcher shouted, "Lor' bless yer, *he* don't mean no harm! He's a-brimmin' over with the milk of human kindness!"

"Let him brim," said I, keeping a safe distance (convinced that in another minute he'd have been brimming over with the blood of human confidence); "I don't want to go near him."

"Now, Mrs. Suffragette," said the O'Flaherty, "let me snapshot you sitting with your arm round him. Think what a grand picture for your book. Look here," to the butcher, "let's get some branches of trees and long grass and things and rig it all up to look like the jungle, and then she can describe some thrilling adventure where, wandering in the bush, she came across this lion lying asleep and made friends with it, and—and—I came along and snapped 'em. Eh? What?"

"No one would believe it," said I. "I don't want to. I won't."

"Well then, have him crouching, about to spring at you? Come now!"

"Is it likely," said I, retreating still further, "that if you did come along and find me attacked by a lion, you would be such a brute as to wait to take a photograph of it all? Why, you always take such a time over your photographs, pacing out the distance, &c., that I'd be in ribbons, or carried clean off, before you'd got your camera out of its case. Nothing will induce me to do as you ask; I don't like his looks at all."

At this moment the lion made a violent grab at Cecil's arm, digging its great claws deep into his coatsleeve, while the other paw plunged playfully round his neck, and he was all but overpowered. But for his luckily having on a thick shooting Norfolk jacket his arm might have been badly torn. When, after this, I offered to snapshot the O'Flaherty fondling the lion he suddenly found that he was rather short of films.

The last few days before we left for the Victoria Falls we spent in camp, packing and re-packing for our trek. Every one had too much luggage; it would cost a fortune to carry it about. With many a sigh I stowed away in a large trunk, to be left at the store, nearly all the pretty clothes I had

brought out. I finally got my possessions down to nearly vanishing-point, and my entire wardrobe for the trek now consisted of one ordinarily long navy-blue cloth skirt for days in camp and two short trek skirts, reaching to a little below the knee, one of khaki drill and the other of dark tweed, each with a flat pocket outside ; two cotton blouses of dark, useful colouring, and open at the neck, and a warmer blouse ; five changes of underlinen ; twelve pairs of stockings (tan) ; three pairs of strong Oxford shoes and a pair of high lace boots (which I never once wore, they proved so hot and heavy) ; also one pair of putties, which I also hardly wore, they were so hot and troublesome, and the thorns and spear grass worked through them into my skin. I found it much better to trek in thin, openwork tan stockings and pick the spear-grass out of your limbs as it collected. You could, at any rate, get at it like that, whereas in woollen putties you endured tortures and had to bear it, as all the thorns had got right inside the tight bandages. Were I to trek again I would have strong drill or linen putties, which never let in thorns or spear-grass. But these are lessons you only learn too late. The mass of useless things we had all of us brought out ! The boxes full of them filled a shed at Mr. C.'s up to the ceiling, and for every ounce we had paid a small fortune on the railway up and paid more in storage.

My trek-kit concluded with two hats : one tobacco-brown felt, large and shady and very light—the most useful thing I could have had—and one white pith helmet, for which I paid £2 at the store and also never once wore.

For coats I had a useful little brown Shetland jacket, bought at a shetland house in far-off London, and I found it most useful, light as a feather, yet warm for early-morning marches ; and I also took and was glad of a huge navy-blue blanket coat, loose and comfortable and reaching from my throat to my feet. It had dark claret-



coloured leather collar and cuffs and dead gold buttons, and was much admired of the natives later on when, in the chill of evening I wore it, in my *machila* or wagon, passing through native kraals at the end of a long day's march. It answered me three purposes on trek, that of warm cloak, dressing-gown, and bed-blanket, and I would never do a trek again without one.

It was a fearful business, our last few days at Livingstone, getting our respective boxes for the trek down to exactly fifty pounds weight, which is the proper load for each carrier ; and they get to know to a pound, and won't carry more or get very sulky and slow. Cecil had a big, expensive, brass weighing-machine, and all day long he and Hymn-Book stood packing our various items of luggage on to this thing and holding it up to see that they did not weigh over fifty pounds. They invariably did, and awful scenes took place, even the genial O'Flaherty's temper giving way when three times running he would have to reopen his box and throw out some cherished possession he was bent on taking. "Damn those carriers," he would say, sending flying his dumb-bells, for instance, "I shall entirely lose my figure and probably grow a hump. What ! still ten pounds too heavy ? I don't believe it ! I'd rather go back to England than take out another thing."

A little way off, I would be sitting on the grass in the deepest dejection. I had to leave behind nearly all the books I had been looking forward to reading on the trek. How could I exist without books ? In the end I had to be satisfied with two or three miserable light paper things and one or two of poems bound in calf. One of my boxes contained only photographic materials, and these alone made one carrier-load. I had to stuff MSS. paper and writing materials and a Letts' Diary amongst my clothes. Another half-load was bed-linen, towels, and tablecloths, the sheets and table-

cloths being things which the men considered absurd luxuries for a trek, but I declared I could not exist without them ; and as for sleeping (as Cecil suggested I should do) in a Jaeger sleeping-bag (a flea-bag they are sometimes rightly called), into which you had to wriggle feet first, and once inside and a lion came along it would take you five minutes to get out again, I said " No " and meant no.

The last evening in our Livingstone camp arrived. We had dinner, as usual, under a brilliant canopy of stars, and a golden moon like a great lamp was swinging in the velvety purple overhead. We all felt very happy ; this time to-morrow night we should be camped beside the beautiful Zambesi River, the thunder of the Victoria Falls close to our ears.

A circle of many red fires surrounded our camp : our carriers for the morrow. Jonas the cook and our two table servants in long white garments (the proper attire for table-boys beyond the Zambesi, and more nearly resembling a lady's nightdress than anything else) flitted about and around our great camp fire of logs, heating up the saucepans of food carried from the camp kitchen and kept hot thus till needed. It was so cold at night that this was necessary right through our travels. Two or three kitchen " slaves " ran about obeying Jonas's orders for this and that. These slaves followed our journeys throughout, but we never asked for them ; they appeared to be a necessary part of Jonas, a sort of parasite born on him, and he arranged with them and, I suppose, fed them at our expense. Big Ben and Early-To-morrow also had their slaves, and so had Hymn-Book. Thus our cortège gradually grew, and we got quite used to finding some new half-clothed individual flitting about during meals and getting cracks on his head from Jonas or Hymn-Book.

" No matter, missis," Jonas would sadly reply when I

remonstrated at this treatment of them (Jonas had a sad face), "he only my slave, he no feel."

We sat up late that night and talked long of the future and the coming trek.

All round us stretched the great night, and when we stopped talking and sat (dinner being over, and the servants and carriers all asleep) gazing dreamily, each of us, into the camp fire, I think we all three saw in those glowing caverns many wondrous things to come. . . . Far away, over the tropical forest, the deep continuous thunder of the Many Waters mingled with our firelight visions, and later, in the long hours of silence, wove itself into our dreams.

CHAPTER V

WE were all up and about very early. It was a great day—our first march. Away over the plain the big red African sun was creeping up as we, all dressed, even to our shady hats, bustled about doing up boxes and packages, and the everlasting weighing of each going on all the time. The way that each load had invariably become overweight since it was last tested was most harassing—the delinquent, without fail, expressing indignant surprise at the miracle, in spite of the palpable fact that the dumb-bells, for instance, had gone back into the trunk, and so on.

The servants were getting the breakfast laid, while a slave blew up the camp fire close by, and Hymn-Book and some of the more intelligent-looking of the carriers were busy getting the tents down amidst a noise and hubbub indescribable.

Hymn-Book was now showing what he was made of. He was here, there and everywhere, yelling at this carrier, beating another with a stick, and chasing another. His chief anxiety appeared to be in preventing the creatures seizing the loads as they were got ready and making off in any direction that appeared good to them, quite regardless of the one we desired to travel in. At first I thought what nice, willing men these carriers were, so ready and anxious to be off, but I soon discovered, through the yells and abuse hurled at them by Hymn-Book, that their zeal was caused by the laudable ambition of each man to get the smallest load for himself. Some loads were perforce under-weight, and looked it; a

few were over-weight, and also looked it. No one made a rush for what we always called "the kitchen-box," a monster packing-case crammed with heavy utensils and fastened to a pole to be carried by two carriers. It was a good deal more than two men's share, and throughout our travels the combined energies of every soul in camp, including the carriers (but not the servants), went daily, before each fresh march, to trying to keep down this particular load. Jonas and all the servants, not having to carry it themselves, ruthlessly piled it up with useless lumber in the shape of empty food-tins, much beloved of the natives to cook in and also to keep things in. Out all these would go spinning every morning regularly, but as soon as ever our backs were turned, back they all went, and in consequence the kitchen-box became a bugbear to the carriers, and later on it was used as a punishment for any two carriers who had misbehaved themselves: "All right, Manjambwe! you will carry the kitchen-box to-morrow!"

If only *one* carrier had not behaved well, it was rather awkward, but it was squared up by seizing an innocent carrier, who was told that when he next did something wrong this would count as his punishment. So, of course, he at once had "goods to the amount," as it were, and gave a lot of trouble during the whole of that day. In this way, however, the kitchen-box was carried successfully through six solid months.

The favourite load of the lot was the small, light basket containing our house-linen. Sometimes that load was almost fading on the horizon before anything else had moved. If I trekked again in Central Africa in the dry season, as we did, I would take most of my things in those light double mat-baskets which are sold by most English drapers, the top fitting down over the lower half. Of such material was our most popular and easy load, the linen-basket; short and

shallow, cool, light, soft to the head, and holding a wondrous amount—stretching, as it did, to any extent. With such baskets, the weather being dry, the Central African traveller could carry twice as much for the same cost of carriers, or else halve his number of carriers, but they should be well corded for fear of theft. However, I don't think we ever lost anything out of ours. Valuables should be in a locked tin trunk, It was well we had avoided all very large and ponderous trunks; we found that the smaller everything was the better.

Breakfast that morning was a hurried meal. All our thoughts were on starting, getting early to our Zambesi camp, and seeing the Victoria Falls. We had waited until now to see them, and the longing had become great.

Our road to them lay along the railway-line, a march of about seven miles between forests, very lonely and beautiful. Soon every carrier had his load on his head, and pale rings on the grass showed where our tents had stood. Good-bye to our first Camp!

We all stood ready. The servants each carried something small—Jonas a kettle with which to make tea quickly on arrival, Big Ben a basket with the teapot and a tin of Swiss milk, Early To-morrow our luncheon-basket packed with a cold lunch.

The air was perfectly delicious, and the hour about 8 A.M.

The Soldier Man, in his most severe and military mood, drew the carriers up into line, and walked down it with Hymn-Book to see if all were there. He, of course, found that the smallest and thinnest carrier of the lot, a shivering boy of sixteen, had got the heaviest load (the kitchen-box excepted), and the biggest and strongest carrier was evincing keen desire to be off, with the coveted linen-basket on his head. A change was made; the words were given and repeated with a loud shout by Hymn-Book—"Quick March!"—and the cortège

started, though not precisely in military style. The Soldier Man looked very stern, but as these were not our real trek-carriers he left them to go along in their own fashion and anyhow. Military methods should prevail later.

Soon we were all trailing along the railway line, the carriers in high feather, singing songs ahead of us, and Hymn-Book keeping up the spirits of all who lagged behind by a large stick freely laid about him.

For the first time I had donned the trek-kit which I wore throughout our travels. My skirt felt appallingly short, and I kept pulling at it, but it grew no longer, and I got used to it. Its comfort to walk in was delightful. Little do men realize how handicapped women are by their clothes. I think it is wonderful that women do as much as they do nowadays, for men so dressed would refuse to move! Oh, it's hard to be a woman in a man-made world. But—*nous allons changer tout cela!*

Half-way on our march we came to a river, a tributary of the Zambesi, which was spanned by a narrow bridge, built across it at a great height, for the train to go over. It had no rails either side, and of course it had to be crossed on foot. I shuddered and declared I could never, *never* do it! Far below rushed the river, and the boards of the bridge were placed so far apart that a false step and one could easily go through. Even some of the carriers refused to try it. They handed their loads to pluckier friends who returned for them, and themselves plunged into the crocodile-infested waters, and swam across. But I couldn't do this, and so I had to be led over on foot by Cecil, expecting every moment to fall over. Had a train come along nearly certain death awaited us, for there was not a foot to spare either side, and we would inevitably be swept over the edge. However, trains to Livingstone luckily only pass twice a week from the south, and we reached the other bank safely.



See page 21

SERVANTS AT LIVINGSTONE
"JONAS," "BIG BEN," AND "EARLY TO-MORROW"



See page 37

THE DEVIL'S BOILING POT (VICTORIA FALLS)

The O'Flaherty kept yelling to me as I was led over (shaking in every limb) that we had much worse than this before us on our travels, rope and twig bridges, &c., and this was "a flea-bite" in comparison.

And now the sun was getting high and it was getting hot enough to make one long for a drink of water, and soon after we began to feel this, a far-off sound—more delicious, great, and glorious than any I had ever heard before—broke gradually upon our ears through the forest ahead.

Hymn-Book stopped short, smiled, held up his hand and said, "The Smoking Waters!" Such is the name the natives give to the Victoria Falls.

For some little time the hot air had been growing cool, with a strange, fragrant, soft moisture. Now the very forest seemed to be singing with gladness, and all the birds too.

We pressed on another two miles. As we advanced, the wondrous sound ahead of us—the thunder of the Falls—grew and grew, and grew louder and more wondrous still, and at last drowned the songs of the birds and filled the very heavens over us, while the earth around us seemed to shake with it.

Beautiful beyond compare grew the forest. We met no human being. It all belonged to itself. One might have been exploring the moon or some fair distant star, it was all so beautifully and deliciously lonely.

And now, here I pause. . . . Can I, thousands of miles now distant from that wonder of the earth, conjure up any mortal words to describe it fitly? I am now so far away from it I fear I have grown cold. I turn over the leaves of my daily diary, kept throughout our travels, and I find that the spirit of the waters must have moved me as I wrote therein, seated one day, weeks after, I remember, at my tent door, overlooking the desert. The sound of the falling waters was still in my ears and heart and brain, so let me end this

chapter now and give you, just as I find it written, my "Rainbow of the Morning!" *

Something in my ears gave me that title—angels perhaps, floating unseen inside the rainbow? I cannot tell you.

The desert day was all soft, golden, and blue; but the River Zambesi seemed still to rush, deep and glad, like a living thing, almost wetting my feet as I sat at my tent door, seeing no Desert around me; only that past scene. Surely the palms bent over my bare head and dipped into the water?—and my hair was wet, because I had just come back to earth from out of the spray and roar of the Smoking Waters? Perhaps even a shred of the first rainbow may have caught in my hair that morning, with an angel's whisper inside, which there, in the Desert, whispered still?

* "The Rainbow of the Morning" appeared later in the *Cape Times* and *Transvaal Leader*, being the first of a series of articles describing the authoress's travels.

CHAPTER VI

From my Diary

“THE RAINBOW OF THE MORNING”

“NOT often are human plans and hopes realized as now.” But my voice is not heard. The voice of the Floods only, fills the golden air behind. Before us, below us, tempest and fury, mists and spray, death and destruction!

Our camp is in the Palm-grove near—yes, within sound of the Falls, just as I had designed in London! But London, and all else, has become a dream, a tale that is told—just a nightmare of a dream, of hideous noises, motor-buses, hoots, chatter, cries various. That was life on earth, but we have all surely died and are not on earth now? or such is the impression. Pigmies, and unreal to ourselves, we stand, and gaze down and across, and unreal even becomes our camp at the Zambesi edge hard by, where, but for the water-thunder, the musical knock of tent-mallets might be heard, as our happy, dusky servants chatter and erect our tents, while others wash up cups and things in the rapids—so swirling, so white, and always, always hurrying by to see the sight beyond.

We had all left our Livingstone camp that morning; tent life is now our portion for long months to come. Our caravan I, with two servants, had soon left behind, and we had struck off into the forest, already moist with the spray of the “Five Fingers” ahead—five foam-columns which rise eternally into the blue.

Into the dream is woven my journey along the Zambesi bank and how we pushed through the forest to find the river, feeling like discoverers, explorers, and I picturing all the joy and wonder of David Livingstone as he too pushed on, years ago, wondering what lay ahead.

Suddenly Hymn-Book, ahead of me, stopped in his dignified walk, held up his black hand, smiled, listened, and said, "The Smoking Waters sing close, missis." I could not reply, for as he bent back a branch for me to pass through to the river-edge, my eyes absorbed my being and I had no words left in me.

Away, softly, gently, rushed past us the fairy river, the silver-and-blue Zambesi! Broad it was, and quiet just here, cool to the ear and lovely to the eye. Its solitary opposite shore was a mile away; its little emerald, palm-grown islands between, looked as if floating on the water; its edges were fringed with gentle palms and bamboo and other sweet foliage—and all, dear river, just as God made thee! Not a boat, not a human figure, not a hut—all as lonely, as untouched, as if we had alighted on to the moon and discovered a moon-river on it flowing into eternity.

The dream proceeded, we moving along the banks as if led by the Spirit of the Waters. The very forest seemed to sing now with gladness, and all the birds too. The scene is changing. The music of an anthem is on the air. As the thunder-sound ahead of us grew, pealing higher to heaven, and yet higher, the waters of the river hurried faster to its call; they broke into angry little rapids which to me sounded impatiently, "Don't stop us, don't stop us! We go to our doom!" and long before the Wonder of the World bursts upon my view the earth under my hurrying feet is shaking with its voice, "the voice of many waters."

The familiar faces of the rest of my party here appear to have joined me, and I to have taken some one's hand and

said, "Let us see it together, we shall never see such again."

It is the moment of a lifetime, something never to be forgotten. . . .

This impresses itself dimly upon me. . . . Drink it all in. . . . This one hour of joy, can never, shall never, return.

Now one finds oneself as in standing upon a mighty cliff at the head of an abyss, well called "The Devil's Boiling Pot." The very trees rock.

Here Dante might have stood and seen lost souls hurled down into everlasting fire, hidden beneath the Shouting Cataracts, which fall for one mile in length ahead of you into their narrow cavern below—a dim, fearful vision of pointed black rocks, now revealed, now hidden in bellowing surf shooting up foam and spray nearly half a mile high.

The Wonder of the World lies before us. Surely eye hath not seen nor ear heard such sight nor sound before ?

One attempts to lay hold of a slender sapling and glance down, but the senses reel, for one slip, and annihilation would be one's certain doom.

Upon the opposite cliff, densely wooded, and so close that, but for the uproar, one could shout across, stand two figures, staggering on a small promontory of green grass against the wind and the noise and the blinding spray. It is all so unreal that they do not seem part of earth, but doomed creatures who sinned ages ago and are suffering their endless punishment. Soon pale hands may come up from the abyss and draw them down, and so they cling to each other ; and the Woman hides her face.

Through the roar I hear one of our party, who somehow knows all about it, saying, as if from a long way off, "That is Danger Point. . . . The green, wet forest on the cliff farther on is the Rain Forest . . . there you must go wrapped in waterproofs or oilskins, or else get wet to the skin. . . .

Maidenhair fern grows in it thickly, and the Falls rush down the opposite chasm so very close that you could throw a rope across. Then comes the 'Leaping Water' Fall—in many ways the grandest of all. The whole volume of that part of the river literally leaps in one body over the cliff upon you, as it were. You draw back terrified . . . yet the water is like liquid diamonds and gold."

"Let us go and see it," I breathe; and so we pass round the chasm-edge, ever and anon again leaning fearfully over, holding our breath. Into the Devil's Glen we go, climbing down, and see laughing monkeys swing from branch to branch on monster trees far over our heads. Seeing the O'Flaherty standing admiring the leafy roof over his head, while we stand above, he looks like a little toy-man in a giant forest. We arrive at the narrow gorge through which pours the whole expanse of water from the Falls. A strange, weird quietness prevails here. The water boils, but quietly, as if it knew the depths below (said to be unfathomable) but meant to keep it a secret to itself. The great, the wonderful, Zambesi Bridge spans the space from cliff to cliff far above our heads, eight hundred feet high—a stupendous, yet fairy-like structure; and soon we are climbing to the top of the cliff again and now are in the Rain Forest. As we walk in this Wonderland of Eternal Rain and Eternal Sun combined, we each find we are walking in a rainbow of our own, lovely little arches which seem to move on while we move, and smaller baby rainbows hang over our heads as if caught in every branch. The soft, steady gush of the rain here (lasting now for centuries) has caused fern-life to flourish in profusion. Maidenhair, hung with liquid jewels, borrowing colours from the countless rainbows, makes a carpet that human feet seem almost to desecrate.

Pink and crimson and yellow mushrooms will surely soon (in this wondrous dream we are walking in) have an elf or sprite

sitting on each, with a small umbrella to keep its golden hair dry ?

The Rain Forest ends, and we emerge into hot sunshine now, and are opposite the "Leaping-Water" Fall. It seems to threaten you—it is so impetuous, so angry, so vast, so destructive. A canoe went over a few days ago and was match-wood before it even reached the cliff, and then was seen no more. A native may have been in it—no one knows, or ever will. At least he had a glorious grave. Who could wish a grander funeral-dirge than this one of the ages, pealing forth for all time to come ?

We return to the camp along the cliffs again, and it is growing dusk ; the Falls shine white as snow opposite us, night advancing behind them, and a moon at her second quarter, like a slender silver boat, seems to be rocking in a violet sea overhead, while a lunar rainbow hangs palely over the chasm.

Stars are appearing as we turn the bend in the Palm Grove and pause to see our whole camp lit by a monster log-fire, silhouetted against the forest spreading on all sides around. How quiet, how dark in the shadows it is here ! The thunder of the Falls is behind us now. We shall sleep well to it to-night.

A deep, deep sigh comes suddenly up from the fringe of pampas-grass bordering the moonlit water ; we all stop short, and some one breathes "A hippo." He sighs again ; he is very fat, and soon, when we are all asleep in our tents, he will somehow lurch his bulky self out of the water and roam the jungle around us for fresh, green grass and the leaves he loves to scrunch in his giant maw. Poor, harmless hippo ! Don't fall over my tent ropes, that is all I ask of you.

It is one of my last waking thoughts as I fall asleep in our Zambesi camp, the river gurgling so close to me that I could step from my bed to the bank and let my feet hang in its ripple.

Silence reigns all night, and no hippos fall over tent-ropes.

Morning on the Zambesi ! Oh, what a sight ; worth coming far to see ?

I awake, and through my tent door lazily watch the river (which seems to be glad with the feel of the dawn) bounding over tiny falls and rocks and islands, away, away, to its final doom.

I feel I must see that Doom again—the Doom that, farther on, suddenly seizes this fairy river, this flowing thing of enchantment and beauty, and hurls it over a cliff into demoniacal depths below, where all its beauty and sunlit spaces boil for evermore in a steaming Devil's Cauldron.

So I speak (to myself, for I am alone now) as I take my cool morning walk to the Falls.

They have left on my mind an impression almost terrible. I dreamt last night of the two figures, the Man and the Woman, on the opposite cliff, the Inferno far below them, the Woman hiding her face. . . . And I advance and see it all again. . . .

* * * * *

But all is changed ; it is morning ; and the low, slanting sun is shining on the eternal spray. Now indeed do I behold the wonder at its very fairest. I have to shade my eyes with my hand, its loveliness is so dazzling.

Over the white abyss, down which thunders this water of the ages, arches a fairy-roof of rainbows, one behind the other, ten of them, each growing fainter, till the last one vanishes in the mists behind.

You must stand by the Victoria Falls in the morning-time, when the river is in flood, to know all the real meaning of our church canticle : “ O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord ! ye waters . . . ye showers and dew . . . ye winds

of God . . . ye seas and floods . . . praise Him and magnify Him for ever."

* * * * *

I am standing an hour later, and have hardly moved or stirred. My hair is wet; almost my eyes too, but that not from spray.

Suddenly I look across the chasm. On the green, sliding, dangerous cliff opposite, the two figures have appeared—the Man and the Woman, just as they did yesterday.

"The Rainbow of the Morning," the loveliest, the deepest in colour of all of them, arches up, straight from the depths below, past Her. She is standing to-day right inside its perfect radiance, yet all unconcerned of it . . . yet conscious, perhaps, of some beauty and unseen things around her? For suddenly, she lifts her face to the sky, holds out her hand to the Man (standing outside the rainbow) and draws him into it.



CHAPTER VII

WE remained ten days in our Zambesi camp—a ten days not to be forgotten.

It was the most beautiful camp that I think anyone who has camped anywhere could have ever known. Loveliness and charm could go no further, and the climate was quite perfect.

It was very near the Falls. Their voice was so near that I never had a dream at night but the Falls and their beauty, or their terror, came into it : sometimes awful, strange dreams of falling in, or else of something falling in that I loved. But the dream held me spellbound.

My little dog "Jane" was very fond of running full-pelt to the very edge of the fearful chasms and then stopping short to look down at a gorgeous butterfly she had, perhaps, been chasing, or some vivid bird, which went wheeling over the turbid depths, and Jane looking as if, for twopence, she would spring after it.

Sweet little companion of those quiet hours spent gazing, yet never satisfied, at the scene before me ! I nearly always preferred to go alone—to think.

The life in camp was also one long joy.

A sharp bend in the river-path, shaded with giant trees and palms, hid the Falls from our view. Our tent doors faced the river, very broad just here, and lovely islands lay as if floating green upon the turquoise waters. The camp-kitchen was close to our tents, but so embosomed in foliage that you

could not see a sign of it. The servants washed up in the very foam of the rapids, and Jonas on the second morning had to report to me that one of our best silver teaspoons had gone over the Falls down far below into the "Devil's Cauldron."

"It will do for the old gentleman to lap up his soup with," said the O'Flaherty; "but look here, Mr. Jonas, and Big Ben and Co., you take care! Understang? Yesterday, Big Ben, you let my tooth-mug go over. Any more sings go over the Falls," concluded the O'Flaherty cheerily, "and that servant what let it go, he go over too; understang?"

"Understang," acquiesced the two delinquents, and retired to ponder upon the exhilarating prospect.

Our meals we partook of under the great arm of a tree laden with flowering creepers, this arm, fully fifty feet long, stretching over the forest path and giving us a shade all day to sit under. At night a royal camp-fire the size of a small haystack lit up the forest around and burnt long after we slept, keeping off hippos and lions and other beasts. A lion had been met quite near where we camped a few weeks previously. I often lay in bed listening fearfully to the cracklings of twigs all around us, for the jungle had had to be cleared to find room for our tents and the thick growth swept our tent roofs.

Snakes frightened me most. One night a ghastly yell awoke the whole camp, and we all rushed out into the moonlight. The O'Flaherty emerged head foremost from his green tent, which he had insisted on having pitched literally all but touching the water. "Oh lor'!" he gasped, "a croc!" and he fell up against a tree shaking.

"I suddenly awoke," he told us; "all was quiet, but something had woken me. In a minute I heard something big and floppy *getting out of the water*. Every now and then it fell back with a heavy splash. I dared not move—para-

lyzed with terror ! It got on to the bank. I hoped it might be an otter, or something harmless like that. But next minute it was in my tent, and its rough skin was scraping along my green-canvas floorcloth—*towards my bed*. I saw a huge long head and jaws. Out of my bed I tumbled—the other side, you bet. Luckily the tent sides were up for air and I wriggled under—and, O lor', I can't go back. The croc is probably now on its hind-legs sniffing into my empty bed."

We helped make him up a couch close to our camp fire, Cecil's gun beside him.

The Soldier Man's opinion, given to me in whispers, as he saw me back to my tent, was "Nightmare"; but myself I believe it really happened. The Zambesi swarms with crocodiles.

Another night Mr. O'Flaherty said that a hippo tried, with a fat sigh, "to sit down on him in bed." But that I did *not* believe.

We went shooting a few days after our arrival at the Falls. It was very exciting. We took Hymn-Book and another gun-bearer and "beat" the forest for miles, and put up both partridge and guinea-fowl, bringing home several brace of each. I had heard of the pathetic gaze in the eyes of "a shot partridge," but had never seen it before. One little fat, brown thing that Cecil had shot sat in his hand dying, its eyes turned on me with such a strange, "full" and reproaching look that I turned hurriedly away, went behind a bush and wept. I wondered, "Shall I ever get used to this?"

At this camp Hymn-Book climbed the trees to procure me some of the beautiful red "Zambesi beans" which grew in profusion, hanging in great brown, velvety pods, which were yet hard as if made of wood.

These beans are considered, by the natives, "lucky," particularly a very rare sort of ebony black with a white stripe, and snow-white cap at one end. They are about two

inches long, and the ordinary kind have the caps of a very vivid scarlet. Hymn-Book swarmed up a tree close to our camp one morning when I sat alone there reading (Cecil and the O'Flaherty having gone into Livingstone for final purchases for our coming travels), and he brought me down a small sack full of the lovely red things. I sent a biscuit-tinful home to my people from Livingstone. "These," said I in the letter, "are typical of our life now, rich in colouring and vivid."

What happy hours I spent in that dear camp on the Zambesi River, seated in an easy camp-chair reading Lawrence Hope's poems—the incarnation, as the whole scene around me was, of romance, happiness, and beauty ! I had one whole day alone with Jane. She would lie asleep at my feet, now and then sitting up to prick her black ears and then dart into the jungle, where I would see a pair of graceful horns rapidly vanishing or hear the furious grunts of a bush-pig as Jane yapped at his heels. One never knew what one might not behold when one lifted one's head to listen to the many queer sounds. I was always half hoping to see a big lion's head peering forth at me from the palmy thickets. Birds of gorgeous plumage fled overhead, and green parrots kept up a constant chatter and screech. Most exquisite butterflies—purple, scarlet, yellow, blue, and golden—floated in the warm azure air, while big bumble-bees made music so drowsy on every flowering shrub that I would often fall asleep.

On the broad, swift, warm river, flowing, always flowing, to its inevitable leap so near by, I watched black islands rise forth from the water and remain awhile, then sink again, as the hippos came up to sun themselves. On a flat rock opposite our camp an ugly crocodile lay dreaming, no doubt very ugly dreams, for hours one morning ; but though I longed to snapshot him I could not, as the sun was full on my lens.

Now and again on such days, red-lettered in my memory, I would feel I must go and sit a while near the Falls—my whole being hungered again for a sight of them ; and, calling Jane, I would leave the camp and follow the little winding path (only a few hundred yards) to where the whole mighty length of the Zambesi hurled itself over the cliffs into the abysses below. Never was I tired of clinging to some slender sapling and letting myself be buffeted with the glorious turmoil of it all. Blinding spray and rocking trees, crashing water, depths all of a seething boil, and then—the rainbow. It would appear softly, like a ghost, at first, and slowly deepened and deepened in tint, and more then appeared again beyond. Mighty arches of lovely colour were they, roofing high the abyss (which opened away from you over a mile in length), then fading into the smothering mists of spray and foam.

I always stood feeling, “ I am watching a cathedral being roofed—with rainbows. Ah, now the roof is complete ! and listen to the great anthem under it ! Thousands of voices, a heavenly Choir of the Blessed, singing in praise together.”

These fancies made the hours I spent looking at the Victoria Falls such hours as one could not ever forget.

Another day, when the Soldier Man and the O’Flaherty were very busy repacking and weighing the loads for our approaching departure, I went with Jane for a morning in the Rain Forest—my farewell to it.

To meet a person starting for the Rain Forest would convey the idea to a stranger merely that they were going a-bathing somewhere.

I had on Cecil’s macintosh and very little under, an umbrella over my head, and a towel upon my arm to dry my hair with after.



OUR ZAMBESI CAMP



ON A ROCK IN THE ZAMBESI RAPIDS

I stood some time on Danger Point, well deserving its name. But for getting a firm stand on the slippery green grass, it seemed easy enough to be swept over by the deafening riot of wind and rain and blinding mist that there prevail from year's end to year's end. It is so strange to stand in thick mist and rain and to look up and see sapphire sky and golden sun overhead.

Soon I was on my path to the Rain Forest, and before I reached it I walked, as before, in rainbows of all sizes. Even tiny baby ones arched up on the green grass at my feet. Another caught in the spokes of my umbrella and I couldn't shake it off! A man coming towards me, bare-headed (the first white man I had seen since leaving Livingstone) had the aspect of a mediæval saint, in a white turkey-towelling dressing-gown and a rainbow all to himself round his head. He stopped to speak, I asking him was I on the right path to the Rain Forest? In the manner you get used to beyond the Zambesi (and all meant in pure pleasure at seeing another white face), he, in five minutes, gave me a rapid résumé of his life and why he was here; and when he told me he'd originally been a "butcher down Natal way" I looked up at his halo and laughed. "I thought you were the spirit of some long dead-and-gone saint," said I, "fond of beautiful things; for there is a rainbow round your head."

He laughed loud. The Leaping Water Fall seemed to laugh too. And we went our different ways.

Jane and I to-day had the Rain Woodland to ourselves. We slushed through running brooks, the little rocks each side thick with maidenhair fern. Then came soft, wet, green lawns of moss or grass, natural glades fading into the inevitable white mists. Great and little mushrooms of all hues clustered around giant trees, whose tops were in hot golden sunshine and blue sky, and all their lower branches steadily poured

and poured with pink and golden, violet and blue, rain like liquid gems falling from Heaven knew where !

In a very few minutes I was wet through. No mere mortal umbrella will long stand the Rain Forest of the Victoria Falls. It comes from no height, you see. It is merely spread and flung all round you from the great cataracts just the other side of the narrow abyss, along whose edge this fairy forest has grown, nourished and watered so beautifully, so warmly, and so eternally. No one can know what a forest can be till they see this forest of rain and sun, each tempered to the other, the rain cooling the sunshine, the sunshine warming the rain ; and every living thing that ever grew or was born in a forest is living here its endless, deathless existence.

I picked an armful of maidenhair fern, Jane watching me with deepest interest and obvious approval. The frogs she chased that day ; the wet green lizards that scuttled up the dripping trees at her approach ; her astonishment at the noise of the Falls and her constant journeys to the edge of the abyss to see what "the devil it all means" (the very words seemed to come out in her intent, intelligent little face as she stood peering over, then looking up at me inquiringly)—all these things I am sure have remained in dear Jane's memory for many a day.

When Cecil and the O'Flaherty (who went to look for me and missed me) got back to camp to lunch they found me rubbing my hair dry, and on the luncheon-table a stew-pan of maidenhair fern, and crimson and yellow mushrooms in another pot.

It was lucky that none of the three of us were over-particular about our food, for an unpleasant feature of our Zambesi camp was the shortage of provisions. Of groceries we had plenty, but you can't eat butter or jam without either bread or biscuits, and such things as dry rice, oatmeal, potatoes, and so forth, fall flat when there is no meat, gravy,

soup, or milk to eat with them. We had made elaborate arrangements with the Livingstone butcher and baker to have these things sent every three days by the twice-a-week train to the care of the man who dwells in the Caia hut the other end of the Zambesi Bridge, but somehow when we sent servants, or went ourselves, they were never there. The good man tried to console us by displaying to us a wild lynx he had caught and caged (poor darling, I longed to let it free, it looked so fiercely and bitterly despairing), and showed us rhino- and hippo-hide shamboks he made for sale, and many pretty things of elephant tusks. But you simply cannot show proper enthusiasm over hippo walking-sticks and elephant-foot inkpots when your whole mind and interest is on roast beef and cottage-bread which hasn't turned up.

After a spell of these disappointments we sent Hymn-Book and two carriers into Livingstone for food, and when it came we sat down, it being the fourth day of hunger, and I don't think anything in heaven above or the earth beneath would have dragged us away from that table till it was all gone !

We laid down on our beds after, and slept the sleep of the just the whole afternoon.

But it was time to leave our beloved Zambesi camp. Our fifty carriers at far-off Magoy awaited our arrival in five days, and the hour for farewell to all this beauty and wonder approached apace.

We were sorry to go, yet glad too, for we were sure that a still more wondrous life awaited us where we were going. The men longed for the day when the chase should claim all their attention.

"The Falls are all very well," said the O'Flaherty, shutting one eye to look down his gun-barrel (I often wondered what they saw there), "but you can't shoot 'em."

"Unless you shoot the rapids," said the Soldier Man. "Yes, Lady Rebel, you will have even more to delight and interest you when our travels begin."

After dinner on our last night the O'Flaherty sang us jovial songs such as "I'm off to Philadelphia in the morn'nin'."

The concert over, we all three went to say good-bye to the Falls by moonlight. That pale spirit of the daylight rainbow—the lunar rainbow—hung over the cliffs, opally white. A kind of strange, slumbering peace brooded over the scene. The very roar and turmoil seemed subdued, softened. Far away over the dark Rain Woodland, lying now in blackness under a sheen of lunar rainbows, shone a large, still, red light, spreading out over the darkness, the one sign of man anywhere around—the light of the Victoria Falls Hotel, which is so beautifully situated that it is a sin to call it an hotel.

It seems to have grown up on the mountains, just like the trees and all else, and its perfect solitariness makes it match all the rest.

"Good-bye for ever! Good-bye! Good-bye!" I murmured as we turned to return to our camp, and soon we all lay sound asleep. And I wonder which of us will ever sleep to the sound of the flowing Zambesi again?

* * * * *

Two days at the Livingstone Hotel followed, busy, very busy days, seeing camp-kit and luggage down to the little railway-station in trolleys, writing letters home (the last for perhaps a long time), getting more uniform for the servants and bright-coloured blankets and cloths for "chiefs" and "Indunas," and also in laying in medicines and more photographic materials—ruinous, of course, in price.

The local chemist, a cheery person with a dismal face, said he was glad he wasn't us. We were going into a land literally swarming with lions. They dragged you away from your

camp-fire and out of your bed, and he didn't expect we should ever come back. Every day news of some one eaten reached Livingstone. However, some people seemed tired of life, and he supposed a lion's inside was as good a grave as any other.

We had proved rather good customers to this worthy and pessimistic gentleman, so perhaps it was natural that he should wish to keep us at Livingstone.

But the next morning beheld us in the train speeding away, once more through dense forest country, bound for Magoy the Benighted. Our camp-kit and belongings filled one whole van to the roof (the camp tables and chairs were slid in last of all, right up against the roof, with difficulty) and our servants filled another van—all much delighted, as we were, at the prospect of the fascinating Unknown that lay before us for so many months.

CHAPTER VIII

A FRIENDLY guard in the train, having nothing much to do when, about once an hour, he'd dug holes in all the tickets, came and lounged up against our door and told us yarns of the country we were bound for. We felt rather depressed when, in his opinion, it was a country to die in but not to live in. As for the lions and blackwater fever, sleeping sickness, and venomous snakes, he told tales which, I must confess, terrified me. My eyes would grow larger and larger, and then the Soldier Man would cough and the O'Flaherty kick him with his foot, and the guard would pull himself up short and remark, "Not but what it's a fine life—a *very* fine life—*while* you're alive."

"Now, guard, you know quite well," said the O'Flaherty, with more frowns and nudges (which I saw quite plainly but pretended not to), "that you told me this morning that it's a life full of adventure and excitement, and that this lady here will have such a lot to write about she'll have to get up your van full of paper and pencils to write with. And you *know* you said you envied us!"

"Lor' bless you," said the guard, who, having piled it on thick to frighten me, now dimly realized that the tip he was expecting at Magoy would for certain be forgotten unless he succeeded in reassuring me, "I do envy you! I was only talking of a residence of a lifetime in these 'ere parts. That tells—but a few months! it'll all be fun!"

"But the lions," I objected, "they seem dreadfully bold

and not to mind anything. Will any of us ever come back ? ”

“ Don’t you fret yourself,” said the guard ; “ the lions is not so bad as they is made out. *Every one* ain’t eaten. ’Tis like this : a shooting party of forty or fifty souls, niggers included, ’ull go into the interior, as you’re doing, and very often only two or three be took.”

A silence ensued, every one wondering which of our party would “ be took ”—a *most* interesting point.

“ And you take the tip,” said the friendly guard, “ and make your carriers sleep in a ring round your camp *always*—not too close, ’cos of the smell, but right round your camp with fires burnin’. Lions, *as a rule*, prefers niggers—till they’ve tasted white man.”

“ You idiot ! ” I heard the O’Flaherty whisper, as he and the guard went down the passage together, “ you’ve made matters worse than before.”

We travelled all day. Wild forest country with no sign of any civilization. Really ! we must be coming to the end of the world !

We had a luncheon-basket with us, and we had passed into the servants’ van at Livingstone a cooked leg of mutton, which, when we got out at wayside stations, we saw being handed round to be gnawed at, and shrinking as the day passed. There are no refreshment-cars on the train after Livingstone, the railway authorities, I suppose, not recognizing anything beyond that point as civilization at all. So we were glad of our food. We got a hurried hot dinner at a queer little spot about nine at night, and then returned to the train to settle ourselves to slumber. I was the only woman in the train and there were altogether only eight men passengers, six of whom were bound for Broken Hill and the Congo. It got very cold as darkness fell. The seats were hard and dirty, and I rolled me up in two blankets, tied a

turkey towel round my head and a shawl over that (in this attire I met Mr. Hugh, the Native Commissioner), and I lay down and slept, the O'Flaherty on the berth above me and Cecil opposite.

The night had passed half away and we were all sound asleep when a voice bawled into our door, "Time to get up. We're approaching Magoy."

It was pitch-dark, about 2.30 A.M., and bitterly cold. Every one sleepy and cross, and I felt I would give worlds to be in bed in a snug London flat and never to have heard of Central Africa, or Magoy, or a trek.

The train stopped. Out we all trundled, and Cecil went up the line (station there was none—we had simply stopped in the middle, apparently, of a forest) to look for our host, Mr. Hugh, the Native Commissioner of this district.

His first sight of the "only white woman he had seen for two years" was probably not encouraging. The bundle of blankets, shawls, and turkey towels sat disconsolately in the fitful gleams of a dirty lantern (waved about by a native) on a pile of boxes: and when he bent down and the Soldier Man introduced him, I remembered how I had designed to dazzle him with my prettiest dress and hat. I now felt I didn't care a bit, everything was so cold and wretched. All I longed for was bed—bed.

I even forgot for a moment to thank him for his kindness in getting up out of his own warm bed this cold dark night in order to meet and welcome us.

He now led the way a little distance up the line, and the cheery lights of a large one-storied bungalow shone through the trees.

The train was puffing itself away already through the night-shrouded forest, its red rear-lights vanishing into the gloom.

Servants came forward to usher us in, and I think we all felt what a good fellow Mr. Hugh was as he led us into a

bright, snug sitting-room, where a large log fire leapt and hissed, a kettle sang on the logs, and a delightful-looking meal awaited us at this God-forsaken hour of 3 A.M. Cecil unwound me from my blankets and I looked round, my heart warmed and comforted. Cecil rubbed his cold fingers over the fire, and the O'Flaherty said, "By Gum, but this is rippin'." (When he is especially jolly he always drops his *gs.*)

It was strange to see on the walls of this lonely bungalow, so very far from the rest of the world, familiar faces known at home, and some of them last seen in London just before sailing; also pretty actresses, views of England, and other things British and far-off.

"And now," said our host, who in the lamplight proved to be a tall, fair, good-looking young man with a bright manner and a happy voice, which augured well for life in these wilds, "now you must all be starving. I know what that train is. Come and sit down. Jim! bring in the soup!"

What a meal it was, at three in the morning! Already, after our Zambesi camp and our food difficulties there, we were learning to thoroughly appreciate a good hot meal, and we all did justice to Mr. Hugh's soup, the saddle of venison (shot the day before on purpose for us), and the floury potatoes. The hot tea meant more to me than all the rest.

We sat and talked a full hour after the meal, and gave our host all the English news.

Then the clock chimed out 4 A.M., and every one realizing that it would be good to be asleep again, under plenty of warm blankets, Mr. Hugh showed me to my room. He had given up his own for me. What a difference this to the cold dirty train!

It looked home-like and warm, lit red by another log-fire. No lions could get in here, at any rate. To-morrow night we would be in our tents again in the open. Let me make the very most of my last night for months to come under a roof. And I did.

CHAPTER IX

By noon next day we were in our own camp, our first real trek camp; for in three days from now our trek began in earnest. No more railway travelling, for we would leave the line far behind us.

We all slept very late after our broken night, and about 9 A.M. I woke to hear a servant rapping at my door and remarking "Tea"—a most welcome word. It was Jonas, sent by Cecil. Mr. Hugh had long been up and had his breakfast and gone out a-hunting buck, but left word that he would be back before long. Shots from the surrounding forest were heard as I sat up in bed drinking my tea, and, thoroughly refreshed with sleep and rest and the tea, I jumped up and went to the little window of my room to see what manner of country this was which we had landed up in, as a beginning to our travels.

I looked out upon as wild and lonely a scene as could be imagined. The Native Commissioner certainly had a neat garden round his bungalow, and a number of half-naked savages were busy gravelling and rolling a path for him, while another watered the flowers, with a vacant expression. But beyond that and a small colony of bee-hive huts not far off, nothing but forest met the eye.

Not a sound broke the stillness of the woods save the cries of birds and the melancholy whistle of a reed-buck in the bush. I had heard it described and recognized it, and I knew that the Soldier Man and the O'Flaherty must be

listening to it in great delight too, as an earnest of the pleasures of the chase to come.

The lonely railway-line cut through the forest, accentuating our removal from civilization. A train only passes through twice a week and is often nearly empty.

I dressed and we all met at breakfast, and found Mr. Hugh just got back and full of stories of his life here and the game he had seen that morning.

"You'll have exciting times, I expect," said he to me as we all sat down; "six lions were seen on this railway-line a week or two back (Jim, the porridge!) a few yards from this bungalow. The engine-driver and guard of the train pelted them with coal off the engine. I was away."

"Six lions! pelted them with coal! then it was broad daylight?"

"Oh yes, about 2 P.M. I believe one big fellow, hit in the shoulder, lay in the long grass over there (pointing out of the window) and snarled back. Oh yes, heaps of lions about, and more every day as you go on."

Somehow in the bright morning light, with blue sky and sunshine everywhere, I didn't feel so afraid as I had done in the train, and I sat and listened to a lot of hunting-talk and felt glad I was going to see and experience it all.

Cecil was asking Mr. Hugh all about the carriers engaged for us and the route we ought to take, what food the carriers always got, and where he would suggest we should pitch our camp until we started on our travels three days hence. A Sunday came in between, so we decided to start on the Monday.

Mr. Hugh was all for our stopping on in his bungalow till we left, but we decided it would be best to get into camp near by, assemble the carriers, and get everything into proper working order before we marched. So a pretty spot was chosen in the forest a short way off, and not too far

from water, and the fifty carriers engaged for us officially were sent for from the bee-hive huts, where they were ready assembled waiting orders, and were duly introduced to us and all their names given to Cecil in a written list and read out, each man giving a shout and holding up his hand as he responded.

Soon the entire party were in the forest with Mr. Hugh, Cecil, the O'Flaherty, and our servants, and, armed with axes and knives, were clearing the trees and bush for our tents, making much hubbub the while. It was a busy scene. I chose the camp-kitchen, and this, in all our travels, was always my first duty upon arriving in camp. Jonas always helped me choose, and we generally found some pretty dell or grove of trees or some shelter (in the Kafue Sahara only ant-hills) where Jonas thought he could do justice to his culinary art.

In a few minutes he and his myrmidons were established as if they'd been there weeks. A fire was lit, an oven in the ground improvised with bricks (always afterwards carried with us for the purpose), the kitchen-slaves hurried hither and thither for water and wood, and down sat Jonas cross-legged, and would have tea ready for us within fifteen minutes of arriving, while often an excellent dinner would be ready within an hour.

We had now seen the last of shops for many a long day, and were from this out entirely dependent for food upon what was shot, supplies brought to our camp by the natives, and upon the contents of our chop-boxes—neat wooden boxes with padlock and key, each one containing so many tins of Swiss milk, so many of jam, and so on with tea, coffee, rice, dried fruits, cheese, tinned butter, potted meats of different kinds, tinned ham, sardines, and compressed soups and vegetables. Each chop-box, carefully packed, held all necessary groceries for four people for a stated length of

time, and if they were to last out our travels we had to take care to make them do for that period.

We soon found that some items were nearly useless, such as compressed soups and vegetables, and others, like Swiss milk, we would now thankfully have trebled in quantity. Rich, fresh, delicious buck soups and beef-tea we had in abundance right through our travels once the shooting began, and Jonas proved most excellent at them. Vegetables we soon longed for, but those supplied to us, tinned, were like hay—no use whatever. In vain Jonas tried them this way and that, and I spent one morning trying them too upon the camp fire. They were horrid; carrots, spinach, cabbage, turnips, cauliflower, all tasted and looked alike, as if pulled out of a very old and musty haystack. Even the servants wouldn't touch them.

Mr. Hugh came to our first lunch in camp. There had been no time as yet to go and look for buck, but Jonas sent us up an excellent repast of reed-buck beef-tea from Mr. Hugh's morning kill, some curried eggs (brought to camp by the villagers), a cold ham, and stewed "evaporated peaches" from the chop-box.

We all sat down to our long three-ply wood dining-table, under two spreading trees, and had a merry lunch full of fun. Our camp was pitched on a slight eminence overlooking the forest below and around, and very quickly the whole scene had a homely air, our tents looking nice and comfortable inside, our beds nicely made up (mine with clean sheets and frilled pillow-cases), a small three-ply wood table beside each bed, and our toilet necessities neatly laid out by Big Ben, Early To-morrow, and Hymn-Book, the camp washstands and green canvas buckets all filled with water, a candlestick and candle to each person ready for the night; and in my tent (the largest of the three) I had real luxury in the shape of tiger-skins spread on the floor, a camp arm-chair padded

with more skins, and a fine long looking-glass to behold myself in. My tent boasted a bathroom and a veranda, and, being of snow-white canvas and lined through with roomy pockets inside, it made a real home to me throughout our wanderings, and was warm on cold nights and cool on hot days later on.

Cecil's tent was a small green Whymper and looked to me horribly uncomfortable, for when he was in it in bed his head stuck out one end and his feet the other, nor could he stand in it upright. I never could see why a Whymper has to be so ghastly uncomfortable, but there appears to be a settled idea amongst sportsmen that it is *the* thing. I believe they think the intense discomfort hardens them.

When you come out of a Whymper your back aches as if it would break in two, standing inside all doubled up, and why six inches more could not have been added to the height and length I never solved, but Cecil always said, "It's a Whymper, don't you see," as one might reply, "It's Paradise."

The O'Flaherty's tent was of green canvas with his initials stamped all over it (for fear a thief carried it off), and was a square one like mine—"a cottage," minus bathroom and veranda. When the Insular Miss joined us later her tent proved to be a Whymper like Cecil's and just as uncomfortable. I used to hear deep sighs and groans issue from it, its inmate trying to dress and undress bent in two. The Soldier Man got over that difficulty by always bathing and dressing in the open, as also did the O'Flaherty, but a Whymper tent for a woman is vile.

The three days in the Magoy camp passed rapidly.

Our first night in the forest I felt very nervous. Such strange, horrid cracklings of twigs, and snuffings and breathings at our tent-flaps went on. Jane slept on a skin beside my bed and was often sitting up listening, and once growled low. My hair stood up on my head, as the saying goes, though

it didn't really, as, being rather long, it would have lifted the tent-roof off. Now and then I sat up to look through the open door and see if the carriers' fires were burning. All was still.

Before night fell Hymn-Book had sent the fifty carriers round the forest to collect wood for fires. Then he made them settle themselves down for the night in a large ring round the camp, in groups, each group with its fire. In each group one man took his turn to keep awake and keep the fire burning and look out for lions, hyenas, and leopards. Before they slept they climbed trees and brought down pillows for themselves in the shape of a monster white bean, the size and thickness of a bolster, which here hung in hundreds to some of the forest trees. It was as hard as stone, but each man used one for his head to rest on. The wonder was that such ponderous things, as heavy as large lyddite shells, could hang in hundreds to the trees and not break the branches. For warmth they basted themselves all over with a thick, vilely smelling white grease and then lay down by the fire. The grease soon melted, and the effect was as though fifty joints were roasting and frizzling all night; and the only comfort was that there were the lions' dinners already cooking for them and that we, cold and raw, would perhaps be left alone.

It nearly froze that night, and the circle of fires helped to keep us warm. I had four blankets and my eiderdown quilt on my bed.

Next day the shooting began, and of course it was a great day in the annals of our journeyings.

The Soldier Man was up at five, and so was Mr. O'Flaherty, and after hot tea and bread and butter they vanished with gun-bearers different ways into the jungle. I had tea in my bed and then put on a dressing-gown and roamed about near the camp with Jane, who was much pleased with everything and was chasing birds and other animals every minute.

The morning was beautiful, the air fresh and cold, the sky

a cloudless blue, and as the sun got up a grateful warmth stole over the earth and one felt glad and happy to be alive.

Nine o'clock came and no men and no sound of them; ten o'clock came, then ten-thirty. Breakfast was laid, and I sat down and called for mine, for I couldn't wait any longer. I was eating my porridge when a shot a long way off made me look up, and the servant waiting on me smiled and said, "Big Baas [Cecil] killed buck."

Twenty minutes later bangs were heard from the opposite direction, and Big Ben remarked, "That is little Baas" (the O'Flaherty).

Another hour and a half passed, and then I heard songs of joy coming through the forest, and a hum went round the camp, "Big Baas arriving." I was sitting reading, but threw down my book and ran to meet them.

"What luck?" I cried, and beheld Cecil coming along with a lovely buck swinging to a pole on the shoulders of two gun-bearers—a reed-buck. He had had a long stalk to get it. Had put up one much earlier in the morning but it got away. The poor pretty creature was shot through the heart, and a pang of pity went through me. His description of his first Central African trophy I borrow from the book "Happy Hunting-grounds," which he kept throughout our travels and will publish some day.

I never saw such a scene as now took place. Hardly had the buck been deposited on the ground close to the camp-kitchen, than with one accord, yelling and fighting like madmen or wolves, the fifty carriers (called to come and cut it up) rushed at it with their axes and knives and, amid howls and shrieks, started to skin and chop it up, each struggling to get some tit-bit for himself. One man got bodily inside the animal, tearing out its heart and other titbits, and then, stuffing them into his mouth and loin-cloth, made a swoop for more.

They fought, they cursed, they swore, they tussled. In ten minutes they were all streaming with gore, even their hair.

Hymn-Book rushed in and lay about him with a stick, felling this man to the earth and sending that one head foremost into the general debris. On the outskirts of this Mashakalumbwe Society crush, women and children (who came running from the huts on hearing the magic word "meat") danced and made shrill cries, egging on their own especial man to fresh deeds of valour in the shape of daring swoops for portions which were hurriedly thrown to their women, who then made off with them as hard as they could. I began to wonder how much of the reed-buck should we get ourselves?

However, the babel gradually died down. What was left of the meat was served out to the carriers in equal portions. Other parts were given to the servants, and a fine saddle and a leg were hung to a tree for our own table.

Soon after, the O'Flaherty returned with another reed-buck and a honey-badger, a queer-looking creature, very grey, and this was skinned and the skin cured and the meat handed over entire to the carriers—who, I think, would eat the Old Gentleman himself, no matter how tough or strong he was.

A deep peace now brooded over the camp.

The carriers had roasted their meat over their fires and lay asleep, gorged!

Cecil and the O'Flaherty rested in long chairs, relating their different chase-experiences and enjoying an after-breakfast cigarette.

Jane sat a little way off amid reed-buck debris, and we beheld with some anxiety a large piece of the hairy skin of the antelope being laboriously gulped down by her with much labour, yet relish.

Doves cooed in the cool shades of the forest around us, and Cecil described to us his first impressions of the country as he had seen it that morning.

His opinion was, "a fine game country and, says Hymn-Book, better still coming."

CHAPTER X

(From the Soldier Man's "Happy Hunting-Grounds")

OUR first day's regular hunting ! Left camp at 5.30 A.M. with a lanky, active gun-bearer aptly named "Lang-Wan," whom Hymn-Book had selected from the carrier crowd, and tried the forest west of the line ; O'Flaherty, who was still asleep, having arranged to go east at the same hour. Weather and climate were perfect. I held quite an animated conversation with Lang-Wan, who seemed determined to talk and did so in his own language, of which I did not understand a word, but the ejaculation "Ha !" on my part at intervals seemed to keep the ball rolling all right : he also did not understand English. At first we found the country bare and denuded of grass by the fires, which annually sweep the country from east to west, but at intervals tracts of bush had escaped, and here we might expect game. Occasionally we put up a pair of partridges but never a covey ; however, it was fur we sought and not feather, and we left them unmolested.

The ground was covered with the spoor of buck which, to my inexperienced eye, appeared most promising ; I did not then realize that it was some days old. We had covered about three miles when I had my first experience of a native hunter's apparent instinct of the presence of buck which we could neither see nor hear ; it was like a pointer scenting game. I don't think there was any spoor which gave him the clue, but suddenly Lang-Wan moved much more carefully and

intently, though nothing was to be seen but the forest trees with their early spring foliage and the dry winter grass, not yet replaced by summer growth. Then suddenly they appeared between the trees ahead—the first wild Central African buck I had seen, and though only the common and, throughout Northern Rhodesia, very universal reed-buck, they were the first, and it would never do to miss them. We had managed to get under cover of some long grass unobserved and I began my first short stalk; it was quite a simple one. The reed-buck continued to graze about fifty yards from the edge of the strip which hid us from their view, a buck and three does. Lang-Wan had my heavier rifle, and, using the .275 Mauser I myself was carrying, I had my first shot at Central African big game. Bang! One moment's sudden, startled stare and the three does vanished between the trees, leaving the buck, whose life in the bush had now ended.

There he lay and, of course, I was vastly pleased with my first trophy—Lang-Wan also beaming, probably in anticipation of his share of fresh meat. We soon had the buck swung to a branch and then turned back to camp. On the way we came suddenly upon a little duiker, but before there was a chance of a shot he had disappeared. Our return appeared a welcome one, and "E.," accompanied by "Jane," was called upon to inspect the first of the trek bag. Jane evinced unqualified satisfaction, but E.'s congratulations were more than tinged with pity and I don't think she will ever care to use a rifle herself.

O'Flaherty, who invariably took some waking, had left camp about an hour after I had, and we shortly heard his cheery announcement that he had had an excellent morning. He had returned alone to camp, leaving his gun-bearer and another native to bring in another reed-buck, also a honey-badger which he had shot for the sake of its skin. Two reed-



"THE O'FLAHERTY"

buck and a honey-badger is a fair start for the first day, and whilst having breakfast we related our respective expeditions, one of which I now enter up in my book of accounts of morning and evening strolls in the happy hunting-grounds of Northern Rhodesia. O'Flaherty had a much more riotous and exciting experience ; this was only to be expected, and besides, he is much younger than I.

He has a fine fresh voice, and entertained us that evening with a musical rendering of Sir Walter Scott's " Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman," telling us how, in days to come, we sportsmen should recall these hours of joy, and so let us now make the most of them we could. For " Ellen " he substituted " Edith " with a killing glance that made it quite appropriate.

*My Hawk is tired of perch and hood
My idle Greyhound loathes his food
My Horse is weary of his stall
And I am sick of captive thrall.
I would I were as I have been
Hunting the Hart in forests green
With bended bow and Bloodhound free
Oh that's the life for Joy and Me !*

*No more at morning dawn I rise
And sun myself in Edith's eyes,
Chase the fleet deer the forest through,
And homeward wend with evening dew ;
A blithesome welcome blithely meet
And lay my trophies at her feet
While sped the eve on wings of glee,
Oh that's the life for Love and Me.*

CHAPTER XI

SUNDAY passed peacefully, though fairly busily. On the Saturday we had again made clearances of all unnecessary baggage with a view to lightening the carrier-loads, and Mr. Hugh, who spent part of each day in our camp, very kindly gave us up a spare room in his bungalow for the things to be left in. I had brought a Blick typewriter with me, but decided to leave that behind, too, for I feared I would have but little time for using it. I kept my diary regularly, however, through the whole time.

On Sunday Mr. Hugh had to leave us to go on his annual "hut-tax" tour. Each male native who occupies a hut has to pay Government ten shillings a year to live in it, and this has to be collected by the different Native Commissioners, a matter involving much worry, patience, and time.

This, of course, is called by some people at home "nothing but slavery." Why not call the shop-girl in London who has to work to live, the carpenter, plumber, City man, typist, governess, soldier, and sailor, slaves, one and all?

The natives in these districts are only too glad to share the benefits of our railways, and the supplies and advantages they bring amongst them, including well-paid work. They learn how to build houses and how to do many things most valuable to them. Why should they cull gladly all the benefits of civilization and be exempt from the one great civilized law, "You must work to live"?

Our fifty carriers were to earn ten shillings a month from

us, and if they stayed out the six months they would earn sixty shillings, of which ten only went to hut-tax. This first ten they were *obliged* to earn and pay away, and a very good thing too. The Mashakalumbwe are an intolerably lazy, dirty, sullen race, intensely objecting to work, but there is no more "slavery" in their finding themselves forced to work for one month in each year. (How nice if that were the year's total of white folks' labours than the stern necessity which forces many of us to work all the year round!)

However, our fifty carriers were going to have the time of their lives, if it were only for the unlimited meat they would get to eat.

The Soldier Man was almost too kind and good to them, and got but scant gratitude in the end, as you will see.

We saw Mr. Hugh off upon his travels on the Sunday afternoon, and were very sorry to lose him. We might, he hoped, knock up against each other later on somewhere.

Cecil and the O'Flaherty picked out the six smartest and cleanest-looking carriers on Sunday and informed them they were to have the honour of being my machila-men. They then had "machila drill" for a couple of hours up and down the railway-line, I in my machila, very nervous that I would get dropped. But they did it fairly well; and when our Sabbath sun set all was in marching order for our early start next morning—the loads, most of them, packed and ranged in a line, and nothing left to do up but our tents, a bag apiece for our bedding, the chairs and tables, and that infernal "kitchen-box" (excuse the expression).

We were all asleep by eight and, having risen at five, we were, as you may believe, ready for our pillows.

Hymn-Book had orders to call us, with hot tea, at 4.30 A.M.

So the kitchen and camp fires were left burning all night.

CHAPTER XII

“Missis ! Time get up ! Sun soon be getting out of bed.”

So murmured Big Ben at my open tent door, and I sat up with a start to realize that it was the first day of our great trek.

It was still quite dark, but the camp was warmed and lighted by the log-fires, and that gave one some sense of comfort, for, oh ! it was bitterly bold at this chill “darkest hour.” At these moments I invariably wished that I had never heard of a trek ! I sat up in bed (Big Ben having lit my candle) and drank my hot tea, and heard Cecil and the O’Flaherty talking, and Hymn-Book some way off in the forest shouting to the carriers and stirring up the still sleeping ones with his foot with many a malediction. It was to me a wretched business, these very early starts, scurrying into one’s clothes by a fitful light, and very cold, not able to find half your things, and outside a perfect babel going on. The O’Flaherty never could be routed out of his bed till the last moment, and sometimes there was nothing for it but to tell the servant to go and let down his tent with him in it. Then out he had to struggle, but certainly dressed and washed quicker than anyone I had ever met before, for often in five minutes he would be at the breakfast-table, fastening up his garments as he came along.

I had barely vacated my tent when it was lying flat, and next was being rolled and thrust into its various bags ; and as each tent went down, the erstwhile pretty, homely camp

assumed suddenly the same look as a house gets when the last furniture-van has departed and the bare glass windows stare back at you a cold farewell.

We sat amid the general hubbub and partook of oatmeal porridge, dished hot off the fire, reed-buck stew with potatoes and onions, brain-cutlets, and hot scones and tea. The food warmed and cheered us and life began to look brighter and treks a little more fascinating, and by the time the last hot scone was gone and the sun was seen to be rising rosily through the forest we were all three in our usual spirits and only longing to be off.

The great unknown stretched before us for many a long day! What adventures, perils, and happenings of many kinds must for certain be awaiting us! It was a glorious thought. The dream of a lifetime achieved! And it seemed to me as if we should never be off.

The carriers gave a lot of trouble. The Soldier Man, in his most military "route-marching, mobilizing" mood, had a great idea of doing the thing in proper style, and ordered all the fifty carriers to be marshalled up in a line, each behind his load. This was finally accomplished after much noise and struggles to get opposite the smallest-looking loads. Hymn-Book had to use his stick freely, but at last it was done and each man stood to 'tention.

Cecil then informed Hymn-Book (who informed the carriers) that at the word "Ready!" each savage would lift his load to his head, and at the word "March!" the cavalcade would start—in a properly dignified and orderly manner. But alas! we were in savage Central Africa and these were not the trained English Tommies. Whether Hymn-Book even understood or spoke their particular lingo was doubtful, though he said he did. But he said that at each new country we came to, and he can't have known all.

Certainly most of the carriers' faces bore an expression

of either complete vacancy or anxious bewilderment as Hymn-Book harangued them. And when the psychological moment came, and the order "Ready!" was thundered out on the air, the whole line broke suddenly up, the men seized the loads, fighting and quarrelling for the favourite ones, every voice was raised in a deafening din, and all law or order had vanished. One man ran off with his load in one direction, another was seen sprinting towards the exactly opposite horizon; two more fought tooth and nail for the favourite light-and-easy "linen-basket," while yet another remained seated on the earth, being too busily occupied in manicuring his toe-nails (his leg balanced up on my bedding-bag) to have even heard the word of command. But most of them were all for getting away, and, so far as we knew, had no idea as yet whither we wished to go, north, south, east, or west.

The Soldier Man, accustomed to his orderly company of English soldiers, shouted in vain, and Hymn-Book and the other servants, seizing huge sticks, ran round in a circle and drove back the carriers like sheep to the starting-point, and then the whole business began over again.

But at last we were off.

We waited till the long line of men were ahead of us (their faces all in the same direction, and Hymn-Book running up and down the line keeping order), and then, calling to my machila-men to follow with my machila, we started ourselves, I preferring to walk while the air was cool.

It was now Monday, July 11, 1910. Cecil and Mr. Hugh, with a map spread out on a table, had had long and earnest discussions about what our route was to be, and it had to be very carefully thought out, because of the scarcity of water at this time of the year and the obvious necessity of striking the necessary fluid once every twenty-four hours if possible.

Cecil and the O'Flaherty wanted, of course, to get all the big-game trophies possible, and Mr. Hugh, knowing the country

so well, was able to tell us where each different specimen might be found, as well as water and the necessary food for the carriers. This consists of grain in addition to meat.

The quantity of solid meat which one carrier can devour at a sitting would, I fancy, cause any mistress of a house to recall with bewilderment the modest English leg of mutton which will feed half a dozen people one day and leave something over for cold the next.

In Central Africa one loses all sense of proportion about meat. One carrier will make a leg of eland or zebra look foolish in a very few minutes if he can get it, and you become quite used to beholding the carcasses of two and three antelope a day (often the size of an English bull) being made short work of between fifty carriers and eight or ten servants. The amount consumed at one's own table is a mere flea-bite in comparison.

It takes 125 lb. of grain per day to feed fifty carriers (2 lb. a day each) when they are not getting meat. When there is meat they get less. But as you cannot feed them entirely on meat or they get ill, to land up at end of each day near some village where this enormous quantity of grain may be bought, or to carry enough for weeks (as we later had to do when we left even kraals behind) is one of the many things to be thought out when drawing out a map of your future travels.

Our first halting-place was to be a spot called Meninga, and that it was so called was all we knew about it. Water would be bad there and scarce, and the water question after that would grow daily worse. As Mr. Hugh explained, "I've put a ring here for water, but if it's not there don't be surprised."

"But," said I, "up here, does water go out for an evening stroll or what?"

"It does," said he, "and often doesn't return till the rains

are on—about December. You are obliged to traverse the Kafue Flats ; they are our Sahara.”

So to the great Kafue Sahara we were now bound. It is a wilderness, very desolate, but marvellous game country, and when I was told we would see zebra and antelope in vast herds and that perhaps no white woman had ever been there before and not many men, black or white, I was all agog to go, water or no water. “Some would be sure to turn up.”

So towards Meninga, on the road to the great Kafue Sahara, we were now bound ; but little bothered we, this lovely morning, about any obstacles, dangers, or difficulties awaiting us ! We pressed on behind our stream of carriers and servants, and soon emerged from the forest and found a level plain stretched far before and around us. This was the wide, wide world at last !

* * * * *

We journeyed for seven hours across the plain.

The O’Flaherty, much excited, rushed ahead of the cavalcade after a time with Hymn-Book, and every village they came to he purchased something, be it only bananas or the brass bangle off some comely Mashakalumbwe woman’s arm. His camera over his shoulder on a strap, his rifle on the other shoulder, arrayed in his trek-kit (of which the chief characteristic was the scarcity of covering), his hat rammed on the back of his head, and his blue eyes dancing with joy and wonder at all he saw, he was typical “Young England” a-hunting for the first time in Central Africa. Crack ! went his rifle if he so much as saw a speck on the plain, and when Hymn-Book respectfully suggested, “No buck here, master ; that is niggers,” the O’Flaherty would airily reload again, remarking vaguely something about that “it kept your hand in and they were too far to really hit.”

Soon his enthusiasm carried him rapidly ahead of us, and he and Hymn-Book were lost in the golden haze which ever receded as we approached.

All the morning we travelled.

I walked five or six miles, then got into my machila and had my first experience of "machiling."

I didn't like it. My bearers had not washed since they first entered this world of sin. The sun was hot. They trotted unevenly, and their thrice-filthy rags waved in the breeze, flapping into my nose. I longed for eau-de-Cologne. I lay deep in the hammock, ghastly uncomfortable. The ropes were too long, and when we came to an ant-hill or a rock in the path (as we did about every two minutes) I was lumped heavily over it and wondered uneasily what spinal complaint might not a trek in Central Africa develop?

After a while my bearers started a blithesome song with a view, I expect, to mitigating my sufferings. The melody lent wings to their feet and the pace grew. We flew over the plain, and the Soldier Man, burdened with his rifle and ammunition, was left behind. I shouted to the men to stop, but the choruses drowned all else, and in despair I leant back on my cushion and resigned myself to the inevitable, with gloomy thoughts of how easily these creatures could spirit me away off the track to some unknown kraal, from whence I might never more be rescued.

Big Ben, however, ran ahead of us, carrying my camera and my solar topee, and this inspired confidence, he so looked "the faithful servant." That topee, by the way, was borne by Big Ben the whole of the thousands of miles of our trek in case I should need it, but it never once sat upon my head. I believe it often sat on *his* when the masters and missis were well out of sight, for once or twice I was sure I beheld it afar off adorning the woolly cranium of Big Ben himself. But when it had travelled its allotted time and had started

to drop to pieces it was thrown away—months later. Moral : you don't want a sun-helmet travelling in Central Africa *in winter*. A large soft felt like mine, which you can lean back in and which won't break, is much nicer. I rather liked my dear tobacco-brown felt hat. It was big, light, shady, and was purchased, trimmed, in High Street, Kensington. Blessed be the hour I chose it and the inspiration that caused the intelligent young person who trimmed it to know that it was destined for a woman going into the heart of Africa. She simply passed round its crown an artistic, thrice-rolled silken cord of dull, artistic, Neapolitan-violet hue, and these terminated in five or six fascinating purple plums made of satin, with the very bloom of the fruit apparently on them.

The fruit was the one touch of vanity in my "get-up." All else was workmanlike enough, saving and excepting my open-work tan stockings.

Alas ! I see the male sportsman lift his hands in horror ! Forgive me, O Nimrod, for I am but a mere woman and my feet have never been clothed in aught thicker. I tried your "nice thick stockings" (as the Soldier Man called them) at Livingstone and they caused my feet to become very sore, so I gave them all to Jonas for his wife (he found one for the occasion) and turned with relief to the hose of my lifetime.

As we proceeded on our way we caught up the O'Flaherty, to my relief, for Cecil I had not even seen for a full hour.

The O'Flaherty had found a queer "grain village," a place where grain is stored in all kinds of queer fashions, and was busily engaged photographing it and then scribbling violently into a monster book carried by a servant at what hour that photo had been taken, where the sun was, what "stop" he had used, how many paces, and so on.

"Very necessary," said he, as I was jogged up and plumped to the earth for the men to have a breather ; "then, if it's

gone black, or fogged, or out of focus, or anything, I learn where I went wrong."

And, having finished the entry, he picked up his camera and shouted, "O lor'! I forgot to turn the last film off!"

This proved, in the case of the O'Flaherty, to be the ruin of quite one-half of his photographs on trek.

We often developed together, he and I, in my tent later on, when we had a few days' rest in our camp, and I got quite accustomed to finding the most extraordinary photographs of Hymn-Book measuring out grain on the back of a zebra, for instance, or my tent, with me at the door, melting into the sky, with trees waving beneath me as if I were up in an aeroplane. Cecil would be taking deliberate aim, *not* at the fine impala which should have been there, but at Big Ben, who all the same had got horns sticking out of his forehead and a tail behind.

"Let's have some tea," said I, "and wait for Cecil to come up. Jonas! make some tea; and Big Ben, you call back the luncheon-basket carrier."

Our first trek-repast was soon ready, and the Soldier Man was seen approaching. Jonas was a marvel at the way he got a kettle to boil on grass or sticks in no time! Down we sat on Mother Earth, in the centre of the sunlit plain, and refreshed exhausted nature. The carriers threw down their loads some way off and themselves upon the grass in a ring, and solemnly handed round a very old and dirty pipe at which each man took a puff and handed it on. Their tobacco was a horror to me. The plain showed signs of the spoor of buck.

The servants had some repast of their own near us, and we all had thus an hour's rest, then moved on again towards the skyline, beginning soon to ask of Hymn-Book, "Where is Meninga?" The reply was always, "*There* is Meninga, missis!" and a sable forefinger pointed to where the sun

would set to-night, but as far as Meninga itself went it might have been in heaven.

On we pressed, and still no sight or sound of man or habitation. All day we had only met two natives, except when once we passed not far off a village. Of animal life we had seen naught, of bird-life very little. Now and then one or two of the handsome African black-and-white crows ("pierrot crows" we nicknamed them) flew quawking ahead of us, and once we heard a buck of some kind in some long grass we were pushing through. But that was all.

Cecil and the O'Flaherty began to look glum.

"Where is the big game, Hymn-Book?"

"Big game coming bime-by, mastah," replied our guide and counsellor, whose thoughts were now intent on not missing Meninga and our only chance of water on this trackless plain. Now and then he would ascend an ant-hill to prospect. A chain of purple hills lay ahead of us. We turned to the east and travelled another hour or two, keeping the hills to our left. Then afar off, on the still open plain, appeared a cluster of bee-hive huts, and the O'Flaherty ahead of us yelled joyfully back, "Meninga!"

In half an hour we were there.

It was not an exhilarating spot, though open at least and breezy. The same vast level plain still spread itself around us, and the entire scenery consisted of *one* ant-eaten white-thorn-tree, leafless, standing in the centre of the plain, and about six grass huts a little way off.

The tree, or rather bush, did its best to invite repose, and threw as much shade as might shelter a beetle. But it made a landmark, a something to camp near. And here we decided to stop for the night and go no farther to-day. In fact, we could not go farther, because Hymn-Book said that here was water—of sorts—but the next water was fifteen miles farther on. He would depart and find the induna of the

village and ask might we draw some of their precious water?

A cheery vision of Hymn-Book hurrying back with a sample of the precious crystal fluid in a tumbler, followed by a carrier with our canvas water-bag dripping, heavily full, made us all three call out, "Oh yes, Hymn-Book, do! and quick! we are *so* thirsty!" and as he departed for the village we sank upon our boxes, strewed around in the sunshine, and tried to practise Christian Science (which all the same I believe in) and say, "There is no such thing as thirst."

It was just as well we did.

When the water appeared I saw the Soldier Man go up and peer anxiously into the green canvas bucket it was carried in. I knew something must be wrong when he inquired of Hymn-Book, "*What's this?*"

It must be obvious that when you don't recognize water, something about it must at least be unusual, and my thirsty heart sank. Christian Science doesn't work when you've trekked without water from 8 A.M. till 3 P.M. Yet I believe in that faith, but only when you've developed your faith-powers. Like your muscles, they need exercise before they will work properly.

When Cecil asked, "What's this?" Hymn-Book replied, feebly, that it was "water"; "for fear" (afterwards said the O'Flaherty) "that we might be spreading it on our bread as treacle."

Well, I drank it. We all drank it—with our eyes shut. Then we had some lunch, all very silent, and the one thorn-tree looked on.

Lunch over, we wandered round a bit, then returned to our boxes; and the two men sat themselves down on them, dropped their arms over their knees and, raising uninterested eyes to me, as I took a snapshot of the scene, remarked, "And we've come fifteen thousand miles for this!"

CHAPTER XIII

WE had some lunch, putting four chop-boxes *en bloc* to make a table and seating ourselves on others. We decided it was not worth while to unpack anything. We must stop here the night and then be off as early as possible.

After lunch Hymn-Book went into the village to announce to the inhabitants, who assembled around him like bees round honey, that our highnesses needed grain for our carriers, likewise milk, eggs, vegetables, and other commodities.

Soon the scene round about our camp was a busy one. Every man and woman who had anything to sell brought it, and Hymn-Book did the chaffering and bargaining and paid for what we had in limbo—by the yard. It was so strange to see common unbleached calico—and very poor, thin stuff at that—taking the place of money and as eagerly sought after.

The grain was brought, sometimes half a sackful, sometimes only enough to fill a tiny wooden bowl. But to make up the needful quantity Hymn-Book took all that came, and professed to be able to keep in his head how much he owed each man and woman, the consequence being the most appalling scenes—women howling and crying at getting thrown at them about four inches of limbo (what use it could be, Heaven knew !) for a bowlful of grain when they declared they had brought much more. Many a fight took place, and one man threatened to commit suicide on the spot



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THE AUTHORESS IN HER MACHILA



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DEJECTED SPORTSMEN: "WE'VE COME FIFTEEN THOUSAND
MILES FOR THIS!"

unless he got the yard he was entitled to. Another cursed Hymn-Book with some solemn kind of Mashakalumbwe curse, but Hymn-Book jabbered back that heathen curses no longer affected him as he was now a baptized Christian and, no matter what he did, was safely booked for Heaven—the attitude of a good many Christians beside Hymn-Book, I've found.

I and the O'Flaherty stood near while all this was going on (Cecil was standing by Hymn-Book to see fair play if possible) trying to photograph the scene, and I really thought I had got a lovely photo of one native anxiously measuring his bit of limbo round his loins to see if it would cover him. But of course the O'Flaherty (who at this stage of our trek was supposed to be teaching me photography) had forgotten, as usual, to turn off my last film. I knew at that period of our travels very little about the art, and never noticed it either, so the native came out later standing on some other native's head or some such conglomeration.

I had never seen an Induna of a village yet, so when Hymn-Book suddenly announced, "Induna coming, bringing presents for your lordships and the lady," I gazed eagerly towards the kraal, hoping to get a nice snapshot of the procession and of his Excellency.

But I saw no procession, and nothing looking like an Induna such as I had pictured him—*i.e.* a dignified old warlike-looking chief, magnificent in leopard-skins and savage trappings, and humble men and maidens bearing his offerings in front of him.

Behold instead, a being half-naked, half-clothed in rags filthier, if possible, than those of his subjects! One leg, thin as a stick, had a cheap wire bangle round its ankle; the other leg was missing, as was likewise one eye. An old broom-handle did duty for the wooden leg. Two skinny chickens, their throats newly cut and still struggling, hung from each

hand, but there was no retinue, no procession, no pomp, no slaves.

He laid the chickens humbly at our feet and then subsided on to the ground and began to scratch himself and mumble, chewing something, exactly like a monkey.

Such was his Excellency the Induna of Meninga. His subjects treated him with supreme indifference, not to say rudeness, and Hymn-Book stared aghast at the two chickens, and shouted to him, "What insult was this? Two miserable chickens for such Highnesses as we were! The present was not good enough, and the Induna must go and fetch more or it would not be accepted."

When Cecil tried to protest, Hymn-Book earnestly adjured him to let *him* manage it. Our dignity must not be lowered. The reputation would precede us wherever we went. As we were quite sure we would have to give a present back, we were all for accepting the two chickens, or indeed nothing. However, we let his Excellency get up and depart, and he was shortly to be seen chasing a third lanky chicken round and round his hut. Having caught it, he returned and presented it (the bird cackling loudly) to Cecil with the two dead ones. It travelled with us for some weeks and I grew quite fond of it, and *it* grew fat and at last was killed for the table, and I felt sad and refused to eat of it.

The whole scene had aroused all that was chivalrous in the nature of our Soldier Man.

The poor, sweet, dirty old Induna! Here was a chance to make his disrespectful subjects treat him in future more as befitted his age and rank. The brutes obviously bullied him. So Cecil gave the Induna a bow as polite and formal as if he were saluting our own sovereign king, and then, in a stage-whisper, back over his shoulder, inquired of Hymn-Book, "What shall I give him in return? What would he like?"

Hymn-Book whispered back that anything would do—limbo ? salt ? soap ? darning-needles ? All these are coinage beyond the Zambesi.

So behold our Cecil, with exquisite politeness, bestowing on the one-eyed bundle of rags at his feet (each time with a sort of bow) one darning-needle, a dab of soap the size of a half-crown (Hymn-Book chose the quantities and would not allow them to be exceeded), salt enough to lay on a bird's tail, and one yard of limbo, which the Induna forthwith stood up to try on to see if it would go round his loins. It wouldn't, so he draped it round his shoulders, stuck the needle into his hair or his scalp (I don't know which), put the soap into his ear, ate the salt, and departed.

* * * * *

By the time all this was over the afternoon was closing in, the sun was slowly setting over the plain, and the sharp chill of the evening air made the big log fire (for which the carriers had been collecting wood from a patch of bush about two miles distant) very welcome ; and we gathered round it to read, write up our diaries, and talk of the events of the day and wonder what to-morrow would bring forth. According to our servants and the information they gleaned from the villagers, our next stop, Sabasuni, fifteen miles off, would be in dense forest once more and big game would from henceforth abound. So we were all in good spirits, and decided we would rise by starlight so as to reach our next camp early in the day, that the men might get the afternoon for the chase. It didn't seem a bit difficult to get up by starlight when one was sitting snuggled up in thick coats round a fire large enough to roast an ox on, the firmament overhead full of frosty stars, and a lovely moon, crescent-shaped like a silver boat, seeming almost to rock in its dark purple sea.

Jonas had given us an excellent little dinner of hot pea-soup, hashed reed-buck, roast potatoes and stewed onions, while for sweets we finished off with biscuits and strawberry jam. Almost throughout the trek we drank tea with our meals, as being safer than water and certainly, as a rule, more palatable, for I can't describe what the water tasted of in some places we camped in—nothing human ! (or was it *very* human ?)

One had to try and forget the various domestic functions that very likely went on in or near it. Sometimes, later in our travels, we found beautiful water, and you must trek in Central Africa in the dry season to know the joy of just these two sweet words, "beautiful water."

We retired to our slumbers soon after 8 P.M. The sun had set at 5. The days were short now. Cecil's little green Whymper had been put up for me close to a mud-hut minus roof, which some native had commenced, and got "killed by a lion the first night in him," explained Big Ben, as he made up Cecil's and the O'Flaherty's beds inside its ill-omened walls.

The lion had jumped over the roofless walls, and all they ever saw again of the occupant was "his head," said Big Ben, adding (as he puffed up the pillows and smoothed the Jaeger blankets), "Lion no like his mud head," which wasn't meant as abuse at all, but an apt description of the way this tribe always plaster mud on to their skulls, up into a hard conical point, and when hard and dry they white-wash it and it becomes a part of themselves, never comes off again, and would no doubt be most indigestible.

This village of Meninga, where our first night on trek was spent, is famous as the spot where the big-game hunter, Selous, narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Mashakalumbwe of this kraal. He was stopping just about where we camped, with his wagon and oxen and servants, and, having apparently offended the tribe in some way, they attacked

him ferociously, and he had to flee for his life into the bush. A few faithful servants remained loyal and went with him, and they were in the bush in hiding and starving for a long while. One can quite believe it. The tribe are anything but good-tempered-looking or peaceable. All our fifty carriers were Mashakalumbwe, and I often wondered, looking at the sullen, scowling visages of some of them (huge, lanky fellows most), what on earth would become of me should anything happen to Cecil and the O'Flaherty together out in this lone wilderness.

My tent was pitched touching the roofless hut, and what with reflections about the lion that had jumped over the hut walls and could so easily enter my tent (for I simply could not sleep at all if my tent-door was laced up), and then reflections about Mr. Selous and his dusky enemies, I lay down that night none too easy in my mind.

My tent-door faced the open plain, which had to be (for privacy); but, O dear! how wide the dark world looked, stretching away under its dome of stars from under my feet as I lay there, and not a sound to break the stillness save the melodious snores of the O'Flaherty through the canvas behind my head!

Far away, on the skyline, were mountains; and I was growing drowsy, and about to drop off, when I saw one mountain beginning to move towards me across the plain. At first it seemed quite natural it should, for I was half in Wonderland, where mountains may dance and no one marvels. But suddenly I struggled back to life and sat up, my blood seeming to congeal in my veins. For the mountain was coming along over the silvery plain quite fast now and, what is more, was making straight for my tent-door. . . . I watched it one minute longer, then broke into yells, for it had turned into what looked like an elephant in the uncertain light.

Answering shouts replied from the hut, and "Coming!" as Cecil and the O'Flaherty apparently struggled out of their Jaeger sleeping-bags and found rifles in the gloom. They dashed round to my door, and I pointed, screaming, to the dark object approaching.

We never quite knew what it was, for before its shape became clear it stopped short. It was wonderful what an enormous size it had looked from afar off, but there was a white mist on the plain that night and I suppose that magnified it. The men thought it was some very large buck. It stood too high to be a lion. It might have been a buffalo, or even a rhino; for though this was not yet rhino or buffalo country, a rhino had been seen not far off and they travel big distances. At all events, as they rushed forward towards it it vanished—back into the white mist.

I fell asleep after that and woke no more till Big Ben called me at 3.30 A.M. according to orders.

It felt the very middle of the night, and indeed was—bitterly cold, the stars frostily twinkling, the moon set, and outside, the carriers sleepily piling up the camp-fire for our breakfast and the servants laying the table, muffled to their cold eyes in blankets and rugs.

By 4.30 A.M. we were marching and had left Meninga behind us, and not even the kraal had awoken, so quietly and speedily did we flit away.

We had engaged a "guide" from the kraal to show us the road to Sabasuni, and this creature stuck to us for quite a long period of our travels after this, finding it, I suppose, a pleasant life, with "plenty meat," "plenty fun," and a prospect of "plenty limbo" at the end.

I don't know why in Meninga so many of its inhabitants were minus an eye, a leg, an ear, or something. The guide was particularly afflicted, for he had only one eye, one ear, and one arm. However, he had two legs, which was the essential.

He was very proud of his post as guardian-angel to our safari, and walked a good way ahead of every one else, with two little slaves of his own running at his heels bearing his honour's cooking utensils and sleeping-gear—the former an empty Nectar tea tin, the latter a ragged blanket caked with the dirt of years.

No one dared even address our guide at this stage of his career. He could lead us all into the desert to die for want of water. He alone knew the way. Whatever happened he mustn't be rubbed up the wrong way. Even Hymn-Book understood that, and that the gentleman's head had become very swollen indeed.

However, there he was, ahead of us, in the gloom of the early African fore-dawn, his fierce-looking white crane feathers waving from out his high white mud head-erection, and reminding me of "The Helmet of Navarre":

*Press where ye see my white plume shine
Amid the ranks of war,
And be your oriflamme to-day
The Helmet of Navarre.*

As I was swung along in my machila I sang the words to impromptu music.

And now the sun rose.

CHAPTER XIV

THE road lay through thick forest again. Soon the bare Meninga Plain lay far behind us, and as the sun got up, and the birds woke in the leafy thicknesses and we knew that buck must be all round us, if only we could see them, we pressed along, laughing, talking, joking and often singing songs and choruses together in the very joy of our hearts.

Jane, infected by the general happiness, flew well ahead of the cavalcade in the wildest spirits, chasing every bird she saw and each time just as confident she would catch it. The darling has chased birds since she was a fat black puppy on fat unsteady legs, but Jane is one of those dear optimists who never learn wisdom or know when to give up. More power to them ! For they keep the world rolling ! I have a bit of the same nature myself, " though I say it as didn't ought " ; and if I hadn't, I would not be above ground now nor this book written.

Assured was I that we were going to strike a lovely time and a glorious life in this far unknown, and the feats I performed on our trek, hope and confidence placing wings to my feet, astonished myself.

I have never been much of a walker, but on this happy day in Central Africa, sick of " carrier bouquet," as the O'Flaherty called the aroma from my machila-bearers, I soon called a halt, struggled out, and walked nearly the whole way to Sabasuni, fifteen miles, without turning a hair.

There was so much to see and to talk about ! Now it would

be a rustle in the long dry grass which grew thick between the trees—and Hymn-Book whispering “Hiss . . . st”—and a sudden stoppage of the whole caravan. Was it a lion? Yes! Hymn-Book thought he had beheld a vanishing yellow tail away “over there.” Could not be sure. But “Milk” and “Lang-Wan,” the two gun-bearers, keen of eye and scent as two hawks, and very like hawks to look at (through a lifetime spent, I suppose, peering into bush and gazing over vast silent plains for game), and with dilated nostrils from always sniffing the breeze for “scent,” these two sable “Nimrods,” tall, upright as two darts, soft-footed, and with eyes in the very backs of their heads apparently, they whisperingly declared, “Yes, one big lion just gone away through forest. Can smell him.”

Then on we went again, after the men had vainly beaten the bush in the hopes that the lion might still be there, I in a terror, for I had always heard how dangerous it is to meet a lion in long grass, and I was very relieved when the safari once more started.

We swung along, and a lovely bird rose up and floated in front of us as if beckoning us on to something.

Hymn-Book said he was a “lucky-bird” because he had blue in him as well as other colours. “Mastah will have fine shoot this day,” prophesied Hymn-Book, and then told us stories of his life Tanganyika way, and how he saw one master killed by a wounded lion who sprang at him and tore him nearly to pieces.

“And what did you do, Hymn-Book?”

“I ran away,” said Hymn-Book calmly.

“And let your master be killed?” cried some one.

“What good to stay?” replied Hymn-Book philosophically: “two dead instead of one.”

I must confess I looked at Hymn-Book with much distrust. A nice servant this! Suppose he ran away when out shooting

with some one and a lion came along ? But here let me record that Hymn-Book throughout our travels proved the faithful servant in all respects, and never flinched even when danger was right up against us. He had a good, honest, open face, and though he had his faults I think we all grew fond of Hymn-Book. His unshaken belief that he was going to Heaven when he died, and Jonas, Big Ben and all the other carriers to Hell, was touching, to say the least of it.

We had been marching about three hours when the whole procession stopped short in the middle of the forest and two or three carriers who had disappeared ahead of us round a bend in the path were seen to be running back, shouting.

What had happened ?

Hymn Book, Jonas, and the other servants rushed on to see, and came flying back to say that a big jungle fire was approaching us—some distance off, it was true—but its path was our path and if we remained and went on to meet it we should all be burnt to cinders.

At this time of the year these fires are very common. The natives set plains and forests of dry grass and trees alight, either through carelessness or purposely, because they want to hunt buck. Sometimes even they are actuated because they want to burn out some enemy in some adjacent kraal, said Hymn-Book, or desire to wipe out some whole village or family. Possibly the women want the Suffrage ?

We were always seeing afar off some huge grass fire, a whole plain blazing, or the sky-line for miles round would be crackling and roaring to the sky.

But here was a forest-fire coming fast to meet us, perhaps measuring miles across. The wind was blowing our way.

Cecil and O'Flaherty consulted rapidly and held parley with the servants and carriers, and as we stood there we could hear a far distant crackling roar and the blue sky overhead

through the trees was now and then dimmed with smoke and ashes floating through it.

Finally Hymn-Book said that he could smell the fire, and it would come along *that* side of the forest path, not *this* one (pointing), and we must all get into the safe side of the forest; and this we did, plunging rapidly through bush and grass and trees and sincerely hoping Hymn-Book was right.

He was. And it was a wonderful sight to see the fire pass about a quarter of a mile away. The heat was intense. My hair stirred with it, but we were quite safe, and when it had passed, leaving the ground black and charred and still smoking, we returned to our narrow path and pushed on, all of us getting black as tinkers as we proceeded, for we were simply wading through black ashes which flew up into our faces, and the men's bare legs, in their "shorts," were a sight to see. It was also very hot to our feet.

At eleven o'clock we came to an open bit of plain in the forest, and decided to stop and have lunch and give the carriers a rest.

Choosing a bit where the fire had not gone we threw ourselves on to the ground, and Jonas and his satellites ran hither and thither making a blaze for our kettle and some hot beef-tea made of buck with which Jonas always kept the camp supplied, and delicious it was with biscuits and butter.

We halted an hour and then pushed on again much refreshed, and began to inquire of Hymn-Book, "How far Sabasuni?" and to consult our map.

Should we lose our way (and there were many paths) it would be serious, for the only water anywhere around for a great distance was (we had been told) to be found at this Sabasuni.

The guide all this time had headed the cavalcade and seemed to be sure of the route, though as the day went on

and no sight or sound of water, or any sort of civilization could be seen and never a human being was met, nor even the footmarks of any to be found in the soft white sandy path, I expressed myself as quite certain that the creature would lead us all to our certain doom, and that in this lone forest we would all have to lie down and die and our bones be picked by the lions. We had brought water, but now it was finished, we had all been so thirsty.

"Now, now," remonstrated the O'Flaherty in a soothing tone as I so delivered myself, "in a few minutes you'll be hearing a jolly gushing stream running and we shall be pitching our camp on its banks, waving trees over our tent-tops, a spiffing lunch spread out, and every one jolly as a sand-boy and right as rain, you'll see."

"Hark!" I cried, hearing shouts. "What are the carriers running for?"

"Water!" said Hymn-Book. "We have arrive Sabasuni."

I almost ran forward, so eager was I to behold the delightful picture so graphically drawn by the ardent and imaginative O'Flaherty.

"But where is Sabasuni?" said I, gazing round blankly when we finally found ourselves halting on the edge of a deep narrow ravine, down at the bottom of which sluggishly flowed a thick white fluid somewhat resembling Jeyes' Fluid when mixed with water. A greeny scum floated also on its surface, and when the carriers all splashed through, the white fluid became black with the slime and mud at the bottom all stirred up.

"Where is Sabasuni? Where is the river?" said I.

On the opposite bank the forest continued without a break, far as eye could reach. No sign of any habitation or human save ourselves.

"*This* Sabasuni," said the guide upon being angrily called

upon, “ this the river. No man live here. All mans live ’nother village ten mile away, but no water that village, so all come here fetch water.”

Correctly speaking, this speech was Hymn-Book’s version of what the guide replied. “ Sabasuni,” in fact, was a filthy ditch in this, the heart of the forest, and this “ sweet water ” was the very sweetest we should now see for some time to come.

There was nothing for it but to pitch our camp here and make the best of it.

The forest was certainly very beautiful, and the Soldier Man and I crossed the ditch (I in my machila), and climbed the opposite bank and went prospecting for a good place for our camp. Here we meant to remain for several days, for our hearts were cheered at the verdict of all the servants and carriers that game would abound here. Already the O’Flaherty was in wildest excitement, declaring he saw buck in all directions, and with his own gun-bearer and a few carriers he began feverishly to undo his tent from its bags and got it up (amidst a perfect babel of sound) under a magnificent tree. The branches were covered with huge dark-red flowers like trumpets, fully three feet long, hanging from every branch, a most lovely sight.

Close by, Cecil and I found an ideal place for our two tents, also under two of the very large shady spreading trees which were a feature of this place.

While Cecil and his men got up my tent (I having chosen exactly where the tent-door should face, a lovely green glade, cool and shady) I went with Jonas, Big Ben, and the other kitchen and table servants to select the kitchen.

I think our camp-kitchens alone would make a lovely series of pictures, bar one or two. We generally found some almost ideal spot for that useful department. This time it was an open space carpeted green, inside a perfect circle of trees

which might have been planted for the purpose. Jonas smiled and said, "Yes, this very nice kitchen," and then called to the kitchen slaves and ordered them to do something, and they ran off into the forest, bringing back armfuls of brush-wood and thorn which they began to make a thick hedge of, round the circle of trees.

I asked what was this for, and Jonas said, "Keep out lions, Missis. Plenty lions here."

"But," said I, "our tents got nothing round them, Jonas? What happen to us?"

"English peoples," said Jonas, respectfully, standing with his hands clasped loosely before him in the manner of soldiers standing "at ease," "English peoples no mind being eaten by lions, Missis. That is what Baases and lady here for? Plenty fun! Take-my-chance."

Jonas said the last sentence quietly all in one, and had evidently often heard it, nor dreamed of being disrespectful.

After all, it was quite true. We took big chances in a life like this, and half the fun consisted in doing so.

All the same, when I had ordered the meals, inspected saucepans and frying-pans, had water fetched and ordered a bucketful of it to be boiled for two solid hours for safety, and given out the stores, a matter that took me a full half-hour, I returned to our camp a few hundred yards away, and, finding the tents nearly up, asked Cecil, "What about a thorn-fence for lions? The servants insist on having one. They say this forest swarms with lions."

"We will have one if you like," said he, looking, however, much pleased at this delightful intelligence, "but I think if I put carriers to sleep at intervals round the camp, and each group keeps a big fire going, we ought to be fairly safe."

"The servants," called out the O'Flaherty, kneeling, dealing volcanic blows with a mallet at his tent-pegs, "of course,

want a thorn-fence. You remember what the guard of the train said, 'If a lion can get a nigger, he prefers them to white people.' "

"Till he has tasted a white person," I added. "*TILL!*"

While my tent was being made comfortable inside, by Cecil spreading tiger-skins on the floor, padding up my arm-chair with cushions, and even sending a carrier up the O'Flaherty's red trumpet-tree wherewith to arrange a tumbler on my camp-table of the thick vivid blossoms, I sat a little way off on a log and watched the whole pretty, homely scene.

What a difference our arrival had already made! It looked like a home now! Already our midday meal was cooking on the kitchen fire inside the grove, and little red sparks went up into the hot blue air. Already the stream (if such it could be called) was lined with chattering carriers performing their ablutions below, not above, the particular pool consecrated to our use. Others roamed the forest, climbing trees for this or that, or setting their native traps for unwary pheasants and partridges and other edible birds and beasts. Several times while the Soldier Man was stooping busy over something a *whirr* overhead made us all look up, and a flight of pheasants once, and a second time sand-grouse, passed over the camp, and it was quite plain that food in abundance would be obtainable all round the camp if necessary.

We were to lunch so soon as it could be got ready and then the two men would go off a-hunting. How peaceful and beautiful it all looked! What a glorious life in truth, if you could put up with the inevitable hardships and roughing!

Suddenly, my eyes being fixed on a distant belt of trees, I saw two graceful striped creatures step out into a small open glade and look round them, gazing at this novel sight grown up so quickly in the forest—an English camp. Tents like

monster mushrooms, and fires and human beings and noise and chatter.

I caught my breath and looked again. Yes, they were two beautiful wild zebra. I could see them distinctly now. They were a good way off, possibly too far to hear our voices, for they showed no fear—only stood quite still, surveying us with interest, the first human beings they had probably ever seen.

I made a sign to the Soldier Man, who came up to where I sat, and I stood up and we looked at them together. My first sight of big game in Central Africa! Cecil's and my first glimpse of zebra in their wild state.

The whole camp saw them now, and whatever anyone was doing he stopped doing it to look at the pretty creatures.

The O'Flaherty merely gave one gasp of joy and, throwing down his tent mallet, rushed into his tent and came out with his rifle, dropped on to all fours and began to crawl towards the zebra.

I suddenly realized that he meant to kill them if he could, and a fearful pang shot through me.

I whispered to Cecil, "No! Don't let him!" but I knew it was no use, for had we not come fifteen thousand miles partly to see and kill and obtain specimens of these and other animals? As at the Victoria Falls, when the shot partridge looked at me with its dying eyes, I felt tears in my own and wondered passionately how *ever* would I get through our travels and the hundreds of beautiful things I must see killed as time went on?

Well, I would not worry the two men over it, but I knew I had not realized how sad it would be.

The O'Flaherty made signs (lying on his chest) to us to help him make a circle and to enclose the zebra as it were, and though Cecil whispered it was no use two people stalking game, he fetched his rifle and did it to humour the O'Flaherty,

and from bush to bush they both started creeping different ways. Hymn-Book, who was making beds in the open, threw down the pillows and also went upon all-fours close behind his master. Every one else remained standing motionless, the great thing in going after game being not to attract their attention by any movement, especially that of an upright form.

I stood motionless too—with mingled feelings almost impossible to describe. I had certainly asked the men to get me zebra skins for a pretty idea I had for furniture, but now that my wish was so near accomplishment I felt far more sad than glad. The two zebra looked such a picture ! And so innocently safe and confiding ! They kept their eyes fixed on the upright forms they could see, and as no one moved they deemed themselves secure ! They knew nothing of their probable doom approaching them close to earth.

Suddenly—yap, yap, yap ! Yelp ! Yelp ! And Jane, naughty, excited Jane, whom every one had forgotten, was seen skimming over the ground like an arrow from a bow, making as hard as she could for the two zebra and also making noise enough to frighten away the Old Gentleman himself and all his satellites.

Curses, muttered first low and deep, then shouts and imprecations, followed her.

“ Come back, Jane ! You little brute ! Heel ! Heel ! ”

But of what avail ?

Jane has no time or ears to heed. Her own cries of joy, her own keenness and shikar instinct, are all that matters now, and the next moment the two zebra are coursing away through the forest, Jane vanishing after them.

I sat down on the log, took off my hat, and fanned myself. It was all over. And the zebra were gone, scot-free and unharmed.

I kept it to myself. But I was *so* glad !

CHAPTER XV

WE remained a week at Sabasuni and a very happy week it was.

By day we hunted. By night we drew round the log fire, told stories, discussed the day's sport, and filled in our diaries. A beautiful quite golden moon hung nightly over our camp almost at the full.

I didn't as a rule join the early morning chase, for it took place so very early ! Long before the stars were snuffed out of the clear sky one would hear faint sounds in the camp-kitchen of a fire being blown up, wood being thrown on, and the tinkle of tea-cups on a tray being carried in the gloom to the sportsmen's tents. Then Cecil dressed out in the open, his figure lit up by a small fire hurriedly blown up close to him to give him warmth, for it was bitterly cold, and he and the O'Flaherty would stand ready to start, gulping down hot tea and deciding in whispers (not to wake me) which way each would go. However, I was always half-awake and could see them through my wide-open tent door, and as they trod softly past it I would call out " Good luck." I then generally turned over and had another sleep, and when I woke again the sun would be rising through the forest, the sky cloudless, the air delicious, the songs of birds everywhere, and Big Ben seen to be laying my own *chota-hazaree* on the small table outside the tent door.

By this time the two sportsmen, of course, would be far away, but while I sat and had my meal, wrapped in my warm

blanket cloak, and glad of it, Jonas and Big Ben, flitting around, would tell me in which direction each had gone, how "much bangs" had come from "over there" from the Little Baas rifle, but "tink he no kill anysing that time," and half an hour later "one big shot" from Big Baas, other direction, and after that came a big silence. They had travelled too far to be heard any more.

I often stood looking into the forest stretching round us on all sides, and felt anxious during these early morning shoots, now and then prolonged till midday. Hymn-Book had warned me never to wander alone into the bush, it was so easy to lose one's way. Many a native, he said, was thus never heard of again, and died of hunger and thirst.

I couldn't see what there was to prevent the two men and their gun-bearers getting lost just as easily as anyone else. Then what should I do? alone with all these black men, so far from any white man or help of any kind. Where should I go to look for them? Only probably to get lost myself! What a dreadful thing it would be!

One day at Sabasuni camp they never returned till nearly three P.M. And not a shot or a sign of any kind to guide us as to the direction they had gone in. I was quite happy at first for some hours wandering round the camp with Jane, picking flowers from the many new and beautiful flowering bushes and trees around us, and arranging them in the tents and on the breakfast table all ready laid for breakfast. I had ordered a nice breakfast of porridge, reed-buck stew with potatoes and onions, hot scones and honey, and I was longing to see them back, and to hear all their adventures. When out as late as this, they rested during the middle of the day, and went a-hunting again about three P.M. and then I generally accompanied them.

Jonas had buckets of boiling water all ready on the camp fires for baths, the scones were spoiling, and I grew more and

more hungry and anxious too. No sign of them, so at ten I called for my breakfast and had it—with Jane, who sat and looked up at me inquiringly, as much as to say, “Where the dickens are they?” Now and then she coursed off after some animal or bird and could be seen vigorously “hunting” through the trees, nose to ground, and then, afraid of her going too far, I would call her back. When the men were away I never could bear Jane to leave me for too long. Breakfast over, I superintended all the beds being carried into the open to be aired, and all the blankets and sheets and things would be spread out on bushes, the tent-flaps tied up, the floors swept and fresh water (such as it was) fetched and placed in our green canvas buckets ready for our use.

Then I went to the camp-kitchen and gave Jonas the orders for the day, unlocked chop-boxes and dispensed stores, and described to Jonas how to make this or that dish which I might be ordering, inspected the pots and pans and generally had to send several to the stream for purification, interviewed sick carriers (one or other was always sick or shamming), gave this one castor oil and that one a pill, and saw it down his throat, and this duty over for the day I returned to my tent, got into an arm-chair and sat and enjoyed the air and the scene. It was an everlasting pleasure in bush camps or plains camps to sit at one's tent-door and just look round, for there was always something to see or something to amuse one. If it was not game feeding, or some lovely bird, or some queer sound which one went to follow up, the carriers and servants' domestic affairs afforded constant interest. I soon got to know that our personal servants in their smart livery looked down greatly on the half-naked carriers, whose sole wardrobe usually consisted of one awful rag, sad-coloured with the grime of years and consisting more of holes than any solid matter. The servants' livery caused them to look other beings, so completely do clothes make the man. We turned one carrier

into a table-boy. He took his new clean livery behind a bush, shed his rag, and no one would have known him when he walked out. His long loose white-linen garment (the regular thing for the Central African table-boy) clothed him snowily from dusky throat to black feet, and was embroidered on the stand-up collar and breast-pocket with scarlet and blue needle-work. His crimson fez sat jauntily on his black hair. He held himself up and faced the world with a different look—as we all do when we feel properly clothed. An hour previous he had sat huddled and naked with the other carriers, indifferent to comment, and knowing that he was of small account in the scheme of the universe; but now already his outlook had changed, and his eye was glad and bright! He was a regular *nouveau-riche* snob too, that newly-made table-boy, for he walked past the huddled carrier-heap (his kraal brothers, not so lucky as himself) as if he had never seen them, and before the day was out he was bullying them all he knew. Some of them refused to go and fetch wood, and his righteous indignation vent itself in seizing a large and thorny stick and laying it about the offenders in such merciless fashion that I had to call to him to stop.

Only the week before, “*Nouveau Riche*,” as we henceforth baptized him (and he was much pleased with his new name and its meaning), had been chased round the trees himself for sulking at having to gather wood for our fires.

The quarrels betwixt the carriers and servants ceased only when they slept, and often kept me entertained, when anxious, as on this particular morning, for the safe return of the sportsmen. The servants made the fifty odd carriers feed and sleep at a respectful distance from themselves, but now and then a carrier, riled at the airs of the household staff, came to within hail of the kitchen, expressly to insult them, and then the fat was in the fire, and on this particular morning it really was, for Jonas (suddenly called “son of a wart-hog”)

sprang up from his occupation of clarifying dripping and upset the saucepan, and the good old saying received practical illustration; flames of fat roaring up and almost roasting Jonas, for he caught fire himself and was put out with difficulty.

Watching all this passed the time, but now the sun was overhead in the heavens, and yet Cecil and the O'Flaherty had not returned. My little bee-clock in my tent pointed to twelve-thirty, then one, then one-thirty. Still no sign of them, and they had left about four A.M. Soon it would be twelve hours. What could have happened? I strolled about in feverish misery, longing to hear the shot with which they generally announced their return when still a mile or two away—but no such sound broke the peace and quiet around us. All the forest was having its noonday sleep. Not even a bird called to another.

I stood looking into the glades stretching all round me, and pictured the most fearful things having happened. Some one's rifle exploding and blowing him into bits. The O'Flaherty shooting Cecil by mistake for a buck (just what he would do, for he was always blazing away at anything he saw moving). A fight with a lion. Both Baas murdered by their gun-bearers for the sake of their watches or rifles. All these catastrophes presented themselves to me and at last I was in a perfect fever. At two-thirty (my lunch standing untasted on the table under the trees) I ordered my machila to go and look for them. The machila-men lay asleep and snoring in the sun, and rose unwillingly when Jonas went to collect them. They looked so cross and sulky I was suddenly filled with dread at trusting myself alone into the forest with them. Also—how could I tell in which direction to go? It might only end in my getting utterly lost myself! Heaven knew what might happen to me! So I waved away the men and going into my tent I brought out my own little B.S.A. rifle

and loaded it, and calling Jonas and Nouveau Riche to accompany me I went first in one direction then another, firing off shots and listening intently for answering ones. Once, while doing this, we saw a herd of lovely impala scampering far away through the trees. They are quite the prettiest of all the buck ; their skins are so satiny and fine a tan, and white underneath, their shape, head, and horns so graceful, and they have such sweet gentle faces and large dark eyes.

I was almost in despair, and tears were being gulped back fast when, to my joy, Jonas cried, " Mastah shoots ! "

I hadn't heard anything, but these natives' hearing is much keener than ours. So we stood still to listen, and in about ten minutes the sound of a shot came ringing quite clearly now through the forest.

I could have shouted for joy ! They were still, however, a long way off, perhaps a mile or two. But it was plain they were getting nearer, for soon came another shot, and rapidly loading my B.S.A. I responded, and then sent Jonas running back to camp to get " breakfast-lunch " ready for the tired and hungry ones.

Nouveau Riche and I advanced to meet the returning party and at last we could see them, and we shouted to each other and I waved my handkerchief and ran to greet them.

Soon we were all three at our camp table, I listening, with the happiest of hearts, to the accounts of the splendid sport each had had.

The Soldier Man had shot a lovely zebra as well as two reed-buck. The O'Flaherty had got one reed-buck and some sand-grouse. While we ate breakfast, thirty-five carriers left camp with poles, and Hymn-Book in command, to go and bring back the zebra whole for me to see. It arrived about six P.M., such a beautiful creature hung to a pole, and the groans and songs of woe of the carriers who

had to carry him could be heard for a full hour before they turned up.

When I had seen him and stroked his beautiful skin, the carriers, eagerly waiting the word of permission, fell upon him as usual like a troop of wolves.

In ten minutes his striped skin was off, Hymn-Book dancing round with a club, dealing crashing blows right and left to ensure the skin getting proper care in the removing (the excitement was so great), and we wanted the skin intact. They love zebra-meat above all flesh, and the moment the skin was safely off—well, no one could ever forget the scene! They howled, they fought, they struggled for the best bits, as with their axes and knives they threw themselves upon the carcass, hacking it into joints and pieces. One man got clean into the zebra's inside and sat there tearing out the coveted portions and keeping off any intruders with an axe. Others ate the raw meat, gobbling like cannibals. One and all streamed with blood. Those who secured good joints ran to make up fires and started roasting their portions at once. Jane was again seen hours later, when the moon was up, slowly trying to gulp down her throat a long strip of zebra-skin, found in the debris. She was in great difficulties, for about two yards was already down, and four more had to follow and couldn't. Cecil went to her aid and did something—I don't know what. At any rate, Jane was very "chup" that night in my tent, and I was relieved when morning came to find she had not come out in black and white stripes

CHAPTER XVI

From my Diary

July 14. Had a glorious evening yesterday out hunting with the Soldier Man, and saw him shoot another fine reed-buck and a hartebeest, also two partridges, three pheasants, and one sand-grouse, so our pot is well supplied with a nice variety of food.

The fascination of the life grows upon me. But for the bad water, which is almost crawling, and has to be boiled for two hours for safety (our one filter being useless), I should be perfectly happy.

I shall never forget my first hunt in these wilds: the forest, so vast, so quiet, so beautiful; Cecil walking first, his rifle on his shoulder, and then Hymn-Book carrying the second rifle. Next comes Lang-Wan (which means Long One), the gun-bearer, an almost naked being with apparently ten eyes to our two, for he can see buck when no one else can. Then comes myself, and then "Jane," who, trembling with excitement, now runs ahead and now falls back at Cecil's stern "Heel!" It is plain to see that Jane knows quite well we are out after buck.

On we go, a mile or so through densest bush, and I am getting scratched and torn to bits and Jane is panting.

Twice we see buck bounding away in the distance, having seen us before we saw them. Then suddenly, in a somewhat open clearing in the forest, Lang-Wan whispers, "Hist!" through his teeth, and we all stop short and gaze where he points.

There stand a lovely herd of hartebeest, quietly feeding, a few hundred yards away, the males keeping guard, as it were, on the outside, the females and some little ones cropping the young grass which has sprung up where the forest fires have burnt the old long grass.

Of course the entire party now assume a crouching, villain-in-the-play sort of posture. In fact, to watch the Soldier Man now, creeping from tree to tree, you only want weird music from the orchestra and an unconscious rival innocently drinking his tea in the inn courtyard to be certain some ghastly deed is about to be perpetrated. Next the murderer lies down flat, face first, and in that highly uncomfortable position remains, occasionally getting nearer the buck he has set his heart on, by a noiseless and dexterous wriggle forward. We all attempt to do the same, I severely hampered, having to clutch Jane by the collar, her low whines causing the villain to look back at her with murderous glances.

What with Jane struggling, and not being accustomed to this style of progression, I begin to ask myself, "Is any buck in the world worth all this?"

When I flounder into an ant's nest and feel them running all over me, I repeat the silent query, and, turning on to my back, I give it up for a bit in despair, still nobly clutching Jane.

Then, turning my eyes round, I see Cecil getting ready to fire.

The hartebeest, a beauty, is about a hundred yards away now, but has grown anxious and stopped feeding. Now he stands, a perfect picture, gazing towards us, yet unable to see us. He looks so grand that I find myself hoping that the shot will miss him. Then I pray it won't. I am torn all ways.

The woods echo as with wild cries, and the hartebeest leaps into the air and makes off. Again Cecil, now on his feet,

takes steady aim, and the hartebeest falls dead, with one last bound upward. The slayer, radiant, in his own quiet way, looks at me as I advance and says, "My first hartebeest!"

To-morrow we move on to Bannakaila, where, says Hymn-Book, "Water like gold, missis. Peoples never wash. Drink once a day. Pay any money sweet water!" Filthy as the water here is, we have engaged a naked being with one eye, one arm, and one and a half legs to carry our water-bag for us to Bannakaila, filled with the crawling stuff from here, which at Bannakaila will be "sweet water."

Everything in this world goes by comparison. Hymn-Book says Sabasuni water will appear like crystal when we see the Bannakaila water—if there is any to see, that is, for it is about time, he tells us, that it "dried right up."

The O'Flaherty has shot two nice reed-buck, and is nearly off his head in consequence. So elated was he, in fact, that to-night he got out his medicine-chest and surgical and dental instruments and sent a message round the carriers by Hymn-Book to say "healing time" had arrived, and he was prepared to heal anything and anyone. When not one carrier responded (all of them preferring to remain in safety by their log-fires) the O'Flaherty went round with Hymn-Book, stirring them up with his foot, feeling their pulses, and consulting his watch meantime with a properly professional air.

"I hope you'll be careful, O'Flaherty," said Cecil, sitting with me by our camp-fire, and too tired with the day's sport to care much if the O'Flaherty polished all the carriers off with his experiments in doctoring. "If even one carrier dies we are stuck fast here, for one load will be carrierless. And I think, if we had to move on in the end, O'Flaherty, in justice it would have to be one of yours."

"Never fear!" replied the enthusiast. "I've been studying

medicine and surgery now for *three weeks*. If that isn't good enough for Northern Rhodesian carriers, who never wash, I don't know what is."

When the O'Flaherty and Hymn-Book returned to the camp an hour later the former looked much subdued.

"It was too dark," I heard him explaining to the Soldier Man as they both retired to rest. "I don't think Condyl's Fluid is poison, though he gave a frightful yell. I administered an emetic on the spot—at which, of course, he yelled louder. Keep it dark, old man, if he dies."

And I actually heard his companion promise that he would, if it didn't mean being "accessory to the fact."

Bannakaila, July 15. We got up at the awful hour of 3.30 A.M. These early starts are killing. Whether we really gain much by it is doubtful, for it's so dark no one can see to pack, or get down tents, or find anything. The confusion is awful, and every soul as cross as two sticks, even the Soldier Man becoming severely military—a sure sign he's in a bad mood.

I very nearly persuaded a newly-married couple to come on this trek, telling them what an ideal honeymoon they'd have. The girl has been brought up in the lap of luxury and can't even put her own boots on. The bridegroom sleeps every day till eleven and will never stop in any house where a breakfast-bell goes at nine.

Struggling this morning by the dim starlight, aided by a piece of candle one inch long, to get my clothes on and my boxes packed, in bitter cold, while every minute some one outside fell over the tent-ropes and Cecil kept inquiring when my tent would be ready to take down, I thought of that bride and bridegroom, and silently thanked Heaven that they had reluctantly decided not to join our trek.

It is hard enough getting the O'Flaherty up, and the only way to do it (when he has had eight to ten calls) is to tell

Hymn-Book and the carriers to “ never mind Baas, but take his tent down as if he were not in it.”

As it collapses, Mr. O’Flaherty wakes and struggles forth out of the ruins, putting on whatever clothes he can find. Then he sits down to our lamplight breakfast, apologizing to me for his sketchy attire.

It was a twelve-mile march here, nothing for carriers who can do fifteen and twenty, but this tribe are the laziest in Rhodesia, and every few minutes, with groans and grunts, they deposited their burdens on the forest path and had a smoke or a snooze.

In vain did the Soldier Man attempt to preserve some sort of military order in our cortège. He might as well have tried to marshal up a flock of sheep or geese.

“ You will tell them this, Hymn-Book. When I say ‘ One ’ each man will stand ready at his own load. When I say ‘ Two ’ each man will lift his load to his head. When I say ‘ Three ’ each man will start. Do you understand, and can you make them understand ? ”

“ Yes, sar,” replies Hymn-Book blithely, not having understood a word himself, and being further unacquainted with the particular lingo spoken by the carriers, “ I tell ’em.”

He jabbers hard for five minutes, standing in front of the row of carriers. The carriers start to jabber back, some of them seizing their loads and making off (in the opposite direction to the one we propose trekking in), others seating themselves comfortably on their haunches, while yet others complete their morning toilets—one creature again, as once before, balancing his big toe upon some article of luggage with a view to carefully manicuring it with the sharpened jaw-bone of Cecil’s last buck.

But the “ One, Two, Three ” goes all wrong, partly because Hymn-Book can’t talk Mashakalumbwe and won’t own up,

partly because the Soldier Man's attitude, standing up in front of the carriers, is so terrifying that they completely lose their heads.

At a thundered "One!" some seize their bundles and scoot. At "Two!" they drop them and implore mercy. At "Three!" very often not a carrier is left, and they have to be chased by Hymn-Book and brought back almost by the scruff of their necks.

This morning, however, for the first time, we got a proper and orderly start, after a scene and a babel which beggars description.

Every carrier got his load upon his head. The O.C. shouted "Ready!" and I scrambled into my machila. The O'Flaherty snapshotted us, and soon, while the sun rose, we were trailing through the forest towards our next stage, the carriers shouting Mashakalumbwe songs and choruses. We were glad now we had got up so early, for our twelve-mile march would be a cool and pleasant one, and we would get settled into our new camp in good time for the men to have the afternoon and evening for shooting.

So elated was the O'Flaherty at the Condyl's Fluid carrier not having died in the night, but "only turned a dull pink," as he expressed it, that, finding our progression too slow for his taste and burning to reach Bannakaila (where we hear the game is even better than at Sabasuni), he took his gun-bearer and hurried on.

When we reached Bannakaila two hours later we found a pile of grain-bags in the middle of an open green clearing, adjacent to the kraal, and the O'Flaherty asleep upon them with an admiring village crowd gaping around. Three impala does and one buck were stretched out dead close by, shot in about ten minutes by the ardent one *en route*.

"This looks good," said Cecil, as we came up, and the O'Flaherty snores betokened a well-earned rest. "I suppose

these are not, by any chance, tame buck? You remember the O'Flaherty shooting the big official's pet sow at Livingstone while it fed in the bush, and rushing into camp to tell us he had got a magnificent specimen of the wart-hog?"

But the O'Flaherty's gun-bearer, jealous of his sleeping master's prowess, said to Hymn-Book:

"Oh, no! Baas found big herd buck in the forest all feeding thick together, and he bang! bang! bang! right into them, and they die, die, die."

Sounds as of a gory battle going on had certainly met our ears, and it was plain the O'Flaherty had blazed away not only all his ammunition, but all his energy as well.

Presently he awoke and sat up, and when Jonas had heated some water for him, and Hymn-Book had propped a looking-glass in front of him on the grain-bags, he shaved himself, and related to us, while we got up the tents, how the impala had fallen to his gun.

"Marvellous country this, I tell you," he said. "Swarms with game! I saw a herd of wolves. Also a lion slunk past me. I could have kicked it with my foot, but"—in a loud stage whisper—"for mercy's sake don't tell Mrs. Suffragette or she won't sleep a wink the rest of the trek—nor shall we."

But I had heard.

"Oh, is it true?" I cried. "*You saw a lion?*"

"Honour bright; but cheer up. You had a lion at your tent-door two nights ago and you never knew it. Saw it with my own eyes creeping round; but, you see, he never touched you."

I gaze steadfastly at our friend, who is making such grimaces shaving that one can't tell if he is serious or not.

Every day we travel now, takes us deeper into the untrodden wilds of Northern Rhodesia, and makes the danger of lions more and more real, and we very often see their spoor in the sand.

I have already had some bad nights lying in my tent, and listening with beating heart to strange cracklings of twigs, deep breathings, and a horrid grunting noise which lions always make when hungry.

The majestic roar, shaking the earth, of which one reads, is apparently a rare sound from a lion, and, they say, only comes forth when he is satisfied.

I must say I should personally prefer it (when sleeping in a tent) to the grunt that means he's hungry, but that's a matter of taste.

This is a very nice camp—for looks.

The open clearing we have entirely to ourselves ; the native village is hidden away in the jungle.

This green open space is closed in on all sides with dense forest, and so plentiful are the buck that, sitting at our tent doors, we see them feeding quietly on the very edge of the woods.

The impala chiefly abounds here, the loveliest of all lovely buck, with its soft, satiny skin of a bright chestnut-brown, markings like black velvet across his hind-quarters, and a most beautiful shape, gazelle-like and symmetrical.

To-day the O.C. has set all the carriers to cleaning and preparing the numerous buckskins he is getting. They peg them out hair downwards on the ground (with Hymn-Book everlastingly cracking them over the head to keep them up to the mark); ten get round one skin and ten round another, and so on ; and, with the jaw-bone of the poor buck itself as a scraper, they sit hour after hour lazily rubbing the teeth of the jaw up and down the fleshy side of the skin till it is clean of all meat, discussing their domestic, love, and family affairs the while—the babel being so great that, on deciding where our camp shall be, we take very good care to have the carriers at least three hundred yards away.

Afternoon. Oh, the water, here ! The moment we arrived

the difficulty began. Water of any sort or kind it was plain is worth its weight in gold in Bannakaila. So soon as we had pitched camp, fourteen carriers carrying long poles hung with every conceivable receptacle we could find for water had to go back to that filthy Sabasuni ditch for the now thrice-precious fluid—twelve miles there and twelve miles back.

They were away hours, of course, and meantime our water-bag got a hole in it through the one-eyed person who carried it running into another carrier's assegai, and all the water leaked out, and there we sat dying of thirst.

Was no water to be got in the whole village—dirty water, smelling water, anything? we asked.

The sun pelted down; we had had a long dry march; our very souls cried for water.

"No water here, anywhere, missis."

"But, Hymn-Book, what do the people do?"

"They go without," said Hymn-Book, "or fetch from long way."

Finally, when I was nearly crying, my thirst became so awful that Hymn-Book said he'd go and find the village induna and tell him the King of Great Britain was my first cousin once removed, and that unless water of some description was forthcoming on the spot the dire vengeance of the great white king would fall on the induna's head for a surety.

He went off to the kraal behind the trees, and I heard a fearful noise going on, Hymn-Book terrifying the old induna till the wretched man confessed that he had half a bucketful of water remaining to him in his own private water-hole, but desired earnestly to keep it for his own use.

The water-hole was protected by a thorn fence and a large, fierce Kafir dog, while the induna practically lived, ate, and slept beside it, to prevent the few drops left from getting stolen.

I don't know what threats or arguments Hymn-Book finally

used, but he turned up in the end with one of our green canvas buckets half-full of a thick compound of the colour and nearly the consistency of treacle, and laid it at my feet—the induna's most precious possession.

I peered into the bucket and shuddered.

“ Oh, Hymn-Book ! What shall I do ? I can't—I *can't*—drink it ! ”

Cecil, much disturbed, filtered it for me through limbo several times, and then I shut my eyes and drank it.

When our water arrived from Sabasuni about sunset we sent the poor old induna two bucketfuls as a reward for his generosity.

Evening. Cecil went out hunting this afternoon and brought back a fine reed-buck, and also his first impala, a lovely one with almost record horns.

He saw two herds of zebra, but did not shoot—there were so many little ones amongst them.

The O'Flaherty got into camp an hour after the Soldier Man's arrival, and had shot a zebra. He related how, after wounding it, he had to race after it and spring bodily upon its back, seizing its head and leaning forward to cut its throat while it reared and plunged ! Of course we believed all this.

We have decided to stay here a few days longer, the shooting is so good ; and our trek then will be to the great Kafue Sahara, where water is still scarcer than here, with only one string of pools (sweet and clear, thank Heaven !), which we must find or die, but where big game will be seen in vast herds.



THE FIRST IMPALA BUCK

CHAPTER XVII

(*From my Diary*)

BANNAKAILA, *July 17.* Being the Sabbath we decided not to trek till to-morrow and to do no shooting to-day, so we have had a very quiet and restful time.

Yesterday Cecil shot a tiny duiker, a sweet little creature, and, as usual, my silly heart ached to see it stretched out as if asleep. They have most beautiful heads, with a pair of miniature, straight-pointed horns about the length of your hand.

I was lying down in my tent just before afternoon-tea yesterday when suddenly the O'Flaherty thrust through at me, without a word, the gory head of a hartebeest on a plate, swimming in its blood. His excitement was too great for any speech, until, sitting up on my bed, I ejaculated, "Oh, how dreadful! It looks like John the Baptist."

"Dreadful, is it?" he exclaimed. "Why, he's a real beauty! I thought you'd be so pleased!"

"It gave me such a turn," said I. "I don't like blood."

A shooting trek is very fascinating, but has decided drawbacks. One seems to live in a perpetual atmosphere of buck. Cecil and the O'Flaherty shoot them and spoor them, hit them and miss them, discussing between whiles *why* they missed them and *how* they hit them. They help to eat those they have hit, and dream at night of fresh hunts and fresh trophies.

Sleeping in the open, as we often do, one hears such dream-land mutterings as: "Here's his spoor again, Hymn-Book!"

By Jove, missed ! Lang-Wan, you double idiot, bring me that gun, will you ? Stone-dead first shot, by Jove ! ”

Even Jane, in her daily naps, is quite obviously hunting ; she whines when, in fancy, she's clutched by the collar, and breaks into faint yelps of joy in her dreams as she is let loose and courses away after a visionary zebra or reed-buck.

The Soldier Man spends little time in camp that he can spend a-hunting. A keener sportsman never carried rifle.

“ Were all men like him in other ways too,” I say to the O'Flaherty who, having hurt his feet, has to rest, and sits hours with me in the shade of my tent-veranda discussing many things, “ the earth would never have heard of the great ‘ Woman-Movement.’ It is the selfish, unchivalrous, bullying specimens of men who are responsible for this sex-war. It is good to have met a man of whom none of those things can be said, and of course I know there are plenty ; but—they are in the minority, I fear.”

“ But if this is so, why have the women put up with it so long ? ”

“ Because they were asleep. We took all we suffered and saw as a matter of course, in the pathetic way that women and children do take things. No movement so great, and far-reaching in its ultimate effects as this, has ever stirred the earth. Nothing can stop it. It is evolution. Men have evolved slowly and naturally, because they were not locked up. Woman is the same strong virile creature as man—only caged since the start of the world—*by man*. Now he is reaping his harvest. Out of that cage she has come, a dangerous thing through enforced captivity ! The more he tries to thrust her back into her cage, the more dangerous she will become—and, it is useless. She will *never* go back. Ah ! *don't* talk to me of the ‘ Antis.’ Even men must look at them with wonder, and the pity that is no compliment !

Fancy fighting to keep your sex *down* ! Our fight is a nobler one than that, even if things are done that excite anger and disapproval, as all wars must do."

" Ah ! the Militants ! Well, I do admire spirit and pluck, though I don't quite approve ; and I will confess, the ' Anti '-women are a poor-spirited lot and their aims somewhat despicable."

" I am so glad you think so. Most men do (in their secret hearts) I find. As to the Militants. Look at the Jameson raid, undertaken to get the vote for Britishers in the Transvaal ! And those offenders, being men, got a fair trial (which Suffragettes never do) and received ' First Division ' treatment and every consideration in prison. I know several of them. Suffragettes break a shilling window, and are fit only for torture amongst criminals."

" Well, I confess we men *have* made you outlaws, and if I were a woman I think I'd break laws all round. Dashed if I wouldn't ! "

" In all directions we are *doing* it, in some form or other. There are ways of rebelling beside violence. A good and faithful husband deserves devotion and gratitude, and generally gets it. All honour to the man who is manly enough to refuse to take advantage of the (il)legal privileges allowed him by our charming English marriage-law. But to the man who considers his sacred marriage-promises ' pie-crust,' including ' with all my worldly goods I thee endow ' (which often apparently means that they remain strictly his own) a bitter awakening often comes. Some erring husbands are honest and manly enough to confess that they have only themselves to thank for whatever harvest they reap. Others ' raise Cain ' in the home, and for the rest of their lives will bully the wretched woman, and often such women-relatives too as have also ' rebelled.' One hypocrite that I know, poses as a Christian Martyr, knowing

all the time that his bad influence on every one led to his troubles, which most people think he richly deserved, and merited more than he got."

"If your sex had our capabilities," said his lordship Man, "they could earn their livings and snap their fingers in the faces of such men as that."

"Ah! the bird that has never had its wings clipped, or been imprisoned in a cage, is hardly in the position to say it can do better than its helpless comrade—*just as good as he*—but with no chance to fly!"

"Tea is ready!" calls Cecil, just back from the chase.

Baas O'Flaherty each morning engages to heal (or kill) the natives, draw teeth, apply bandages, smear on ointment, extract thorns, and so on.

Our friend, on the principle that there is nothing like impressing the nigger, insists on these occasions on getting into my Japanese dressing-gown, puts a large, glistening tin oil-funnel inverted upon his head, and sallies forth from a tent in a grave manner and with much dignity, Big Ben and Nouveau Riche following, carrying the medicine-chest. This is then opened on the grass and the natives crowd round, the invalids being carried up (those that are bad enough), while those who are able to walk show a strong disposition to bolt, and have to be seized and held fast by Big Ben and Nouveau Riche, ordered thereto by the amateur physician, who isn't going to lose any chances of testing his skill if he can help it.

"Hi, there! What's that nigger making off for, Big Ben?" he shouts; "the one with his face tied up?"

"He say," explains Big Ben with a grin, "'Me tooth hurt now, but me tooth hurt more when Medicine Baas break in three pieces. I no want.'"

"Rot! Go and fetch him back. Tell him the case he refers to—ahem!—was the old induna, whose teeth were

already in pieces through age. *His* teeth will come out slick. Fetch him back and tell him he shall have two whole yards of limbo if he sits still while I'm—er—tugging."

Big Ben departs—so also does the invalid, as fast as his legs will carry him, if not faster.

Leaving Big Ben to chase and, if possible, catch him, the O'Flaherty and Nouveau Riche spread nice clean white limbo on the grass and arrange on it, in tempting array, medicine bottles, surgical instruments—such as gleaming knives, saws, pincers, and forceps—brightly-coloured sweets to drop into the mouths of those for whom nauseous mixtures are intended, and also pots of ointment and rolls of bandages.

These preparations seem to inspire more distrust than confidence, for the crowd begins perceptibly thinning; so, to attract their attention, O'Flaherty Baas performs sleight-of-hand tricks in a careless, off-hand manner.

Producing a red billiard-ball from under the sleeve of my dressing-gown, he looks astonished at it, as much as to say, "How did this get here?" then tosses it down his throat, swallowing it with a fearful gulp and grimace. The crowd surges back towards us, craning their heads over each other's shoulders to see. This is indeed a magic medicine-man! To swallow stone balls and live!

Hymn-Book loudly interprets.

"See, O Mashakalumbwe!" (The O'Flaherty dictates it all first in English.) "See the doings of this, the greatest of great white magicians! Death cannot touch him! That stone ball has gone into his august stomach! Watch close, O Mashakalumbwe, and he will order it to come forth from the throat of your induna yonder!"

The induna gives a faint howl as the O'Flaherty strides suddenly up to him and, pressing his abdomen and then forcing his mouth open, extracts the billiard ball, tossing it into the air for all to see.

There is a universal yell of wonder and delight, and the induna starts to feel himself carefully all over, for fear other foreign objects may have somehow got into him.

Confidence being now somewhat restored, a few more mysteries are shown, and then, as a reward for his labours, five or six invalids are eventually prevailed upon to submit themselves to the tender mercies of the magic healer.

But not one soul will have his teeth drawn ! Two or three get castor oil and a jujube after it, and a refractory carrier who is always shamming sick gets a powerful emetic, and retires a sadder and wiser man, for he had meant to get off carrying any load at all to-morrow. So our medicine-man has his uses.

In another direction, later on, Cecil may be seen presiding over the morning barter of meat and limbo for grain. He is usually very patient and quiet, as is his way ; but when the babel gets too loud—when the women raise their voices to shrill cries, and the men find that a quarter of a yard won't cover more than a corresponding quarter of their anatomy, and Hymn-Book demands too much grain—he has been known to lay about him with a stick, shout at Hymn-Book, and consign the yelling crowd to a place warmer even than Northern Rhodesia.

A subject nearly as absorbing as the prospects of sport is as to whether our chop-boxes will last out the allotted time. Chop-boxes, a name inexplicable, are light boxes of venesta wood, furnished with a neat bolt and padlock, and contain an allowance of varied groceries for a stated number of people for a certain time.

Ours came from a noted London firm, and each one must last us two weeks, or we shall have to go without such necessities as tea, sugar, butter, flour, jam, and Swiss milk until we reach civilization again.

Consequently, a real and deep anxiety prevails when it is

discovered that I am very "strong" on the Swiss milk, the O'Flaherty on the butter, and Cecil on the jam; and though we all three try to be very polite over it, things become somewhat strained, and a tendency to "You're another!" retorts makes itself apparent.

I really can't think of anything bringing out human nature more effectively than being on trek in the farthest Rhodesian wilds, where not so much as a pinch of salt nor a spoonful of sugar has ever been seen before, where shops and money have become things of the dim bygone, where the "back of beyond" still stretches ahead of you for many a long day, and the Swiss milk, the butter, and the jam are vanishing by leaps and bounds.

"Dear me!" says some one, peering with deep anxiety into the weekly pound-of-butter tin, "the week isn't half gone, but the butter—where is it?"

There is no need even to glance at the culprit. It is an accepted fact that he is *always* the butter criminal. Nevertheless, he assumes an unconcerned air and takes up the jam-pot.

"I'll swear we left this jam-pot half-full last night!" he remarks. "One of these infernal thieves of servants has been at it, I suppose!"

"I'm afraid I'm the thief," says Cecil; "I had it for *chota-hazri* this morning. Perhaps I ate more than my share. Big Ben, the Swiss milk."

"No more Swiss milk in tin, mastah," says Big Ben, turning an empty tin ostentatiously upside down in the air.

"No more Swiss milk!" exclaims the O'Flaherty, carefully avoiding looking at me. "Now, who the dickens finished this?" Snatching the empty tin from Big Ben and shutting one eye, the better to penetrate its recesses, he continues, "Licked clean, by Jove!"

"I'm sure it isn't!" I exclaim indignantly. "Of course

you mean me. I *do* like Swiss milk, and this eternal buck is starving me, because I can't eat it every day, and so I *have* to eat the milk. But I couldn't lick out that jagged tin if I wanted to ! ”

“ You are to have as much Swiss milk as ever you can eat,” says Cecil, “ and if any economy is to be practised, O'Flaherty, it will be, if you please, over the—cr—butter, and——”

“ And the jam,” finishes the O'Flaherty tartly.

To which Cecil replies, “ Precisely so. I was about to add, ‘ *and the jam.* ’ ”

A kind of faint Arctic breeze seems to have blown across the breakfast-table, and a silence ensues, broken by Cecil (anxious to patch up matters) saying, “ It's much cooler to-day.”

No one responds ; the fact is too obvious.

“ Have some more butter, O'Flaherty ? ” continues the Soldier Man.

“ No, thanks. Have some more jam ? ”

“ Thank you, no ! ” Then, turning to me : “ Finish that new tin of Swiss milk ; there's plenty more. Come ! ”

“ No, thank you. Let the O'Flaherty have it,” I reply, almost tearfully.

“ Thanks, I can drink my tea easily without milk. As far as I am concerned you needn't have brought milk in the chop-boxes.”

“ And as far as *I'm* concerned,” say I, “ you could have left the butter out entirely. I never touch it.”

“ And as far as *I'm* concerned——” begins Cecil, gazing round the table and the landscape to see what he can say he could have done without——“ By Jove ! look at that magnificent buck feeding near that bush with yellow flowers ! Hymn-Book, quick, my Mauser ! ”

And the breeze passes by, and all is serene in camp again.

Every one but myself is now very busy getting things packed for our move on Monday. In order to expedite matters, Cecil is taking down his tent to-day and will sleep in the open, while the O'Flaherty, never having put his up here, has nothing to do save to help in the general work and "guard the water," which takes up one person's entire time in Bannakaila the waterless.

As soon as the carriers arrive with the buckets, filled at Sabasuni, twelve miles away, natives begin to flock from all points of the compass to gaze longingly at the delicious fluid.

The creatures are so lazy and indolent that most of them prefer to remain thirsty to going and fetching the water for themselves. Naturally they never dream of washing, and only when the need for drink becomes too imperious to be resisted will a man or woman fetch water, and even then sometimes only just enough for themselves. Often they entirely ignore the claims of the aged, the sick, and even the helpless little children, who, when they smell water being carried into the kraal or camp, rush at it with yells, fighting to suck up a little pool where it has got spilled, and crying piteously if they arrive too late.

To these poor little naked wretches one feels bound to give some, scarce as it is for our own needs, but we naturally sternly harden our hearts against the advances of big, able-bodied men and buxom women, who have never done anything in the shape of a stroke of work all their lives, and won't. They come and sit round our kitchen in a ring and gaze at the water-buckets, only waiting for Jonas or Big Ben to turn their backs for one minute to fill the pannikins concealed beneath their rags and drink their fill.

One may well ask, "Why build their village in such a waterless spot at all, and, having done so, why remain in it?" But that is the Kafir all over—lazy, unthinking, feckless, improvident.

Some one of their tribe must originally have built himself a hut here, a matter only occupying a day or two. He forgot all about wanting water. Others followed, and a colony of huts sprang up. Perhaps there was some small river at the beginning. Probably it dried up; they do in Rhodesia. But they were too lazy to move! Here they were, and here they would remain, no one ever getting enough to drink, and the death-rate probably enormous.

A shooting-party is a godsend to these people, for water can be stolen daily with a little watching and manœuvring; and so, discovering all this, we have taken turns to guard the water, for even the servants are not to be trusted. They will sell it for things they want themselves, and say "it got upset."

Truly, a trek beyond the Zambesi teaches you lessons in economy, not only in food and the eking out of your clothes, needles, cotton, note-paper, pencils, soap, tooth-powder, and a hundred other small things which no one bothers about where shops supply more, but in your use of water. Not one drop, not one half-cupful, is wasted. To upset any is a calamity, a crime; and Cecil and the O'Flaherty had their green canvas basins filled with it on arrival here, and the O'Flaherty has washed nine times in his and Cecil the same. I have had clean water once a day and feel horribly selfish.

I wondered at first why game of all kinds should be apparently most plentiful in this country where there is least water, but it is for that very reason it abounds. If water were scattered about broadcast, the game would be scattered as well, and would not be forced to collect near where water is. Here at Bannakaila there is thick shade and cover for the daytime, and the pool at Sabasuni, twelve miles away, is nothing of a journey for buck and birds, lions, leopards, hyenas, and wild pigs. Drink they must, and so you know

where to find them. The only difficulty is to be there early enough. The night makes safe cover, and they go in herds to drink then. If they find a camp near their water they will avoid it, and doubtless go great distances in some other direction to quench their thirst.

On the great Kafue Sahara, where we trek next, there is only one string of pools known to exist till you come to the Kafue River. Yet game will be seen there, so we are told, in vast herds, and they will travel twenty and thirty miles for their water.

We are looking forward to it very much, our only anxiety being as to whether we shall strike the pools. A native guide, the man who carried our water-bag here from Sabasuni, has been engaged—after endless jabber between him and Hymn-Book—to conduct our party to these all-important pools, which he says he knows.

If we find them he receives six yards of limbo; and if we all die, he dies first. Hymn-Book has carefully explained this to him, and he has expressed himself as being quite agreeable to the arrangement.

Conscious of his now important position in our midst, and impressed with his new dignities, his family have this afternoon occupied themselves in plastering his skull afresh with new clay and whitewash, into the top of which is now planted a large bunch of white feathers from the tail of a huge white bird that walks about these jungles, lifting its feet gingerly, as if very particular about the cleanliness of the ground.

A bunch of pampas-grass is fastened on behind our guide at his waist, and sticks out like a tail, and there is another in front—his sole clothing. He is now strutting round the camp and village, the cynosure of all eyes. He has requisitioned a small, skinny "slave," a child of about ten, to follow him on the march, carrying his "luggage"—the usual dirty blanket and an empty jagged food tin, in which his meals

will be cooked. He had also arranged for an oil-tin full of water to be carried along for him by the slave, but that we will not permit. He will be allowed to take two or three good drinks for the heat of the day, but not sufficient (as he intended) for two days. A good thirst on his part may save us all from dying of it, and he will realize that he has to find water before sunset. He looks a terrible rascal and we don't trust him a bit.

Last evening Cecil, the O'Flaherty, and I all went out shooting guinea-fowl and partridges. I carried my own small B.S.A. rifle, a dear little thing of which I am very proud, and came from my tent in proper shooting-kit—buckskin shoes, tan stockings, a khaki shirt, the tobacco-coloured felt hat, and the short skirt cut to a little below the knee.

"Very workmanlike and pretty!" said the Soldier Man; "now," as we plunged into the jungle, "learn not to scream when a gun goes off; keep in a line with me, O'Flaherty, Hymn-Book, and Lang-Wan, so as to put up birds and not get shot; and don't mind thorns, brambles, holes, ants' nests, or *anything*."

We had a most exciting evening, and soon came on to the places where at a "Hiss-t!" from Hymn-Book we all crouched down, for there, a short way off, the speckled guinea-fowl ran almost like chickens, thirty or forty of them. The men's first shots were at a covey of partridges which Jane put up, and of which they got three. I had several shots at running guinea-fowl, but hit nothing. But I was not too disappointed, for I believe the first bird or buck I kill I shall cry over dreadfully, Suffragettes generally being tenderer-hearted than most folks.

We returned to camp, however, with a splendid bag—seven guinea-fowl, three partridges, and one pheasant, which last, Jonas cooked for our game course.

And now to bed and to dream of the great Kafue flats, and so farewell to Bannakaila the waterless.

If my diary comes to an abrupt and untimely end, and yet somehow reaches England, I will leave it to some one to add "Finis." But we confidently hope that our guardian-angel in the pampas-grass will prove equal to the high hopes entertained of him.

CHAPTER XVIII

(*From my Diary*)

On the Kafue Sahara, July 18, 1910. Here we are, not dead yet, halting for lunch on the Kafue flats. We were all up this morning again by starlight, and it was bitterly cold till the new day began to creep up over the world. Then the sun rose. The jungle round us was wet with dew, and all sorts of strange and wonderful sounds came from the leafy thickness.

A large log fire sent us to sleep last night (it was cold enough to enjoy it thoroughly), and had not burnt itself out when we again awoke, Big Ben having arrived with four o'clock tea and bread and butter. The servants and carriers piled on whole branches of trees, partly to light up the scene, partly for warmth. By its aid breakfast was over and the carrier-loads laid out neatly ready in a row, each carrier (at last) at attention behind his own, by the time the sun had risen.

It is a momentous day for us all. Up till now, wild and remote as our surroundings have been, we have at least been in touch with the native and his kraal. Now we are passing from even that much civilization and penetrating the farthest wilds indeed. As I write, halting at midday on the great Kafue Sahara, we have, hours ago, seen our last of villages and their occupants, and have been trekking now for some time upon a great level plain (dead flat all round us to the horizon), dotted with dreary, dry ant-hills running up to points and the shape of a small bell-tent, and some nearly that size. These meet the gaze wherever you look. The ground

was once long, waving grass, but the veldt fires have left nothing save black ashes—beloved of the sportsmen because the buck love to lick the salt it forms and to crop at the young green grass-shoots which here and there are coming up through it.

“The abomination of desolation !” was my first impression, as our long caravan emerged into this Sahara, but already I can feel in me the call and charm of the desert.

The short halt on the edge of the Sahara is over, and the caravan moves on again, led, as before, by the guide, who is giving himself increasing airs as the general desolation increases. We are utterly in his hands now. How he knows which way to go is astonishing, for when we have moved over the flats an hour or so all the landmarks become merged into the everlasting ant-hill and black ash ; the “inverted bowl” of blue overhead arches down to the level horizon right round us. Where we are, whither we are going, when we shall get there, and what we shall get to, Heaven—and the guide—alone know !

We called the luncheon halt ten minutes ago, and while Jonas boils a kettle behind an ant-hill, Hymn-Book, Nouveau Riche and Early-To-morrow-Morning (a very wide-awake boy too) lay lunch on a table made of chop-boxes.

Now there is a sudden “Hisst” from the throng of carriers. The whisper goes round excitedly—“Game !”

Up on the tallest ant-hill he can find, goes Cecil, quietly and leisurely. The O’Flaherty in excited fashion swarms up another. I struggle out of my machila and climb up on a third ant-hill, and stand and shade my eyes with my hand. The carriers and servants get on to yet other ant-hills.

A wonderful sight meets my gaze. To my left a huge herd of zebra stand quietly feeding, about half a mile away. Ahead of me, again other dark forms slowly move about.

"What are they?" I call to Cecil, and he cries back, with suppressed excitement, "Roan!"

Again I look, and to my right see five or six strange-looking animals.

"Wildebeest, otherwise gnu," calls Cecil.

These have shaggy manes and queer faces like the fabulous animals of some fairy tale. They are too far away to see or scent us yet. Near them are three more zebras, their beautiful stripes gleaming in the sunlight. Why, we are in a vast zoological garden of Nature's making! Wherever you look you see something alive—herds of lovely animals, sometimes with splendid horns silhouetted black and slender against the eternal blue of the sky. Here and there is a low thorn bush; here and there a tree. Otherwise the desert reigns supreme, dotted with brown ant-hills.

But I must go—they are calling me to lunch. The O'Flaherty is fairly dancing in his excitement.

"Give me something to eat—anything! I must be off; I'm going to have one of those zebras. Hurry up, Mrs. Suffragette! and you shall have a baby zebra as a pet—if I can get one! Think of it! Trotting after you like a pet lamb!"

Cecil is quietly seeing to his guns and ammunition, swallowing food between-whiles as he stands. "Excuse my beginning lunch," he calls to me. "We'll start trekking again quickly, I think; and I'll branch off over there and try for a roan."

"I saw them," continues the O'Flaherty, bolting biscuits and potted meat. "Horns that make one's mouth water! But there'll be plenty later on for me."

I really must stop and bolt some lunch, too, for I want to see the hunt myself.

Halt, 4 P.M. We are about to have tea. Oh, what a day it has been! But a great anxiety is assailing us. No water

has been found yet. Whenever Hymn-Book asks the guide, "When are we coming to water?" the brute points to the horizon and says: "Water long way!" If you ask, "How far?" you get no satisfactory answer. Their only idea of describing distance is either to point to the sky to show you where the sun will be when you reach your destination, or to recall to your mind some other distance you *have* travelled, and then draw a comparison. Thus the guide, when pressed as to when we shall reach water, points to where the sun will set, and then points lower still, which means that the sun will have set "a long time" when you get there. But it is impossible to discover whether it will be ten to-night, ten to-morrow morning, or a week hence.

Mr. O'Flaherty says he would enjoy murdering him and drinking his blood, and as to the first half I should enjoy it also. But, thirsty as I am (for our water is finished), I've not arrived at the blood-drinking stage yet.

Badgered by Hymn-Book, the One-Eyed One further lets drop the cryptic remark: "Sabasuni to Bannakaila, long way! Bannakaila to this, long way! Water much, much, *much* more long way than Sabasuni or Bannakaila!"

A groan goes up, and the two men nobly suppress a desire to kick the fellow into the middle of next week, but, muttering instead, "Lead on!" we start again.

For hours now we have suffered thirst and all its attendant discomfort. Half a small kettleful of water has been carefully saved for tea, which we are now about to have, as being more likely to refresh and keep us going than drinking the water itself.

The hunt after the zebra and the buck was witnessed by everybody. I stood on an ant-hill to watch Cecil and the O'Flaherty after their different quarries—one to the east, the other to the west. The loads were deposited on the ground, and the carriers (congregated on other ant-hills) gazed

enraptured. For a long while I watched Cecil, a speck in the distance, stalking his roan, which fed just on the outside of the herd. He crept from ant-hill to ant-hill, Hymn-Book behind him, and when he got near an ant-hill close to the buck he wanted, he went flat on his chest as usual, and started wriggling like a snake along the earth, Hymn-Book squirming behind him. Then he reached the ant-hill and cautiously crawled up it, so close now to the buck that the slightest sound would have sent the whole herd flying away over the desert.

There was intense excitement among the carriers and servants; even he of the one eye stood spellbound. There was not a sound amongst us as we watched.

Now Cecil is up on the ant-hill and is carefully finding a resting-place for his gun, its muzzle pointing straight at the king of the herd. Crash! Into the hot blue air leaps the roan, and falls stone dead at the first shot.

Almost immediately after, there begins, in exactly the opposite direction, a kind of Spion Kop engagement, so to speak, between the O'Flaherty and the zebra herd. The "bangs" go fast and furious, and the enemy are seen careering in all directions, flourishing their heels and tails wildly. Now and then one sees the O'Flaherty sprinting, first this way, then that, after a zebra. One knows he must (thirsty as he is) be simply pouring with perspiration! When he has wounded a zebra he chases it till he has got it by the tail. Then he hangs on till the poor thing falls. He returned to us literally soaked in blood and with his face dripping with perspiration. As for his clothes, they were like Joseph's coat! But he was radiant.

"Got him! Thought he was dead, and climbed on to him to find out, when he sprang up and tried to bite me. Narrow shave, eh?"

"Where's my baby zebra?" I inquired, feeling rather sad at all this.

" Bolted—a lot of them. Dear little things. Jove ! what a country, Captain ! "

" It is indeed," calmly replied Cecil, sitting gazing at our empty water-bag dreamily. " A country full of interest. But we must really trek on. Hymn-Book ! Start again. Call the carriers ! "

Kafue Flats, July 21. It is some days since I wrote. Life grows more and more wonderful, and I shall never be able to tell of half we are doing and seeing. Late on the night of the day I last wrote, we struck water, but I shall not easily forget what we went through first, with fatigue, and rage with the idiot who was supposed to be guiding us to the pools, and who seemed totally unconcerned at his failure to do so and the fate that awaited us unless water turned up. As the sun began to set our anxiety and sufferings grew unbearable, and yet the guide marched calmly along as if there was nothing to worry about. Frequent halts were called and the guide yelled at to stop. Then Hymn-Book would go for him, pointing to the sun setting like a great ball of crimson flame on the low, far-off, purple horizon.

" Menda ! (water). Where's the menda, son of a dog ? "

Jabber, jabber, jabber, and a skinny black forefinger points to what may mean midnight, eternity, Heaven knows what.

" I'll get on to that ant-hill and see for myself," says Cecil, while the O'Flaherty exhausts what little energy he has left, pursuing our guardian angel round another ant-hill to kick him, though Cecil mildly points out, as he climbs his observatory, " Will kicking the fellow cause water to appear, O'Flaherty ? If you think there's *any* likelihood of it, do it by all means. But by the ordinary laws of Nature, you know, we're really more likely to reach water by keeping the brute able to use his legs."

The servants are very imitative, and I really begin to

feel a little sorry for the guide, for, in order to please us and divert our wrath from themselves, they have all seized large sticks and start to chase and belabour the One-Eyed One.

However, some good comes of it all. The guide's brain begins to work ! Up till now I verily believe he was marching blindly on, trusting to luck to strike water some time before to-morrow or next day. Coming from the waterless districts he inhabits, he has learnt, as they all do, to go without water for days, like a camel, and what would kill us would have hardly any effect on him. I think it would take ten days of thirst to kill a "salted" Bannakaila native. So he has not greatly worried himself.

Now, feeling uneasy at the way every one is going for him, he mildly announced to Hymn-Book, "Me think. No beat. If me think, water come."

So he is allowed fifteen minutes to think in, and stands on an ant-hill doing it.

Cecil, from *his* ant-hill, announces, "Not a gleam or sign of water to be seen anywhere," and we all groan. I long to have a good cry, but decide not to—just yet. The rest is a fevered dream of Hymn-Book coming to say he and the guide will go on to search for water, while we stop where we are. He will find us again (for it is growing dark) "by mastah's shots," for the O.C. arranges that after an hour or so he will fire off his gun at intervals.

The whole caravan sinks, sitting or lying, to the ground, and silence falls upon us all, stranded here in this dreary wilderness.

Is this to be the end of our trek ? We ought to have carried water, but that hateful guide was so confident of finding the pools, and we had not one man to spare to carry it ; also, it was such filthy stuff to trouble to carry much of.

I sit propped against an ant-hill and have fitful sleeps, waking up now and then (it is now quite dark and the stars are coming out) to hear Cecil and the O'Flaherty talking in a desultory fashion. The O'Flaherty, like all Irishmen, grows very despondent. He is always either up or down.

"You'll tell my mater the end was peaceful, Captain, won't you?"

His back is turned and his hat over his face, so that it is impossible to say whether he is in earnest or not.

"But, O'Flaherty, if you die, why should I survive, may I ask?" inquires the Soldier Man in a somewhat injured tone, as much as to say, "Why should I be robbed of the *kudos* of dying as well?"

"Oh, I don't know; some one always survives and gets back to civilization, and you're the kind that always does. You've led a better life than me. I wish to goodness now I hadn't done—well, all sorts of things. All the wrong things I've ever done are marshalling themselves past me, in *troops*, as it were. Like when you drown, don't you know?"

"Come, come," says Cecil, "this won't do. One would say you had committed a murder."

"You won't leave me here for the lions to pick my bones?"

"But what could I do with your—your—remains?" demands Cecil. "Every carrier, as you know, has his load, and——"

"Leave some of my luggage behind," suggests the O'Flaherty, "and hoist my corpse on to the carrier that carries my—well, say my medicine-chest. It hasn't helped us much here. I was wondering, an hour ago, whether we could slake our thirst with ipecacuanha wine or ammoniated quinine; but they'd probably finish us off entirely. I wish I'd never come trekking beyond the Zambesi!"

This sort of thing goes on for what seems to me ages. There is not a sign or a sound to denote the return of Hymn-

Book and the guide, and the O'Flaherty is sure they'll get lost, and our case will be worse than before.

Then, from afar off, we hear a sound that the two men try hard to cover up, as it were, by talking as hard as they can ; and I might never have known what it meant had not Jonas, coming up, said :

" Please, mastah, big lion arriving. Give matches. Me light fire of grass."

This finishes me off entirely and I have a good private cry in earnest.

Jonas quickly lights his fires of grass, and the carriers collect material and light others. The O.C. does all he can to comfort me, making me sit close to him.

" He won't come near us now," he says. " Think what splendid copy it is for your book."

" I don't care one bit about my book," I sob. " What good will it be to me if I'm eaten ? Oh, there it is again ! Oh, this is too terrible ! "

" My rifle is all ready if anything comes along," says he, " but I assure you they will give us a wide berth now these fires are lit. And the fires will guide Hymn-Book back, too. You'll see, we shall be in a lovely camp to-morrow, and all this be forgotten."

" How far off are the lions ? " I ask, sitting listening intently.

" Oh, a long way," says my companion.

" Not four hundred yards," comes the O'Flaherty's voice from the gloom (by way of cheering me, I suppose). " It all depends upon whether they've found food this evening."

This somewhat enigmatical observation causes me to dissolve into tears once more. I am dreadfully, terribly frightened.

" Any minute now they—they may spring upon us," I

say. "They may only be a few feet off, it's so dark beyond those fires."

"I wish you would hold your tongue, O'Flaherty," says Cecil. "Cannot you see you are causing great trouble?"

"Shut up yourself!" says the O'Flaherty, testily. "You may enjoy being chewed up by a lion, but I don't. And if talking about it and being despondent, sort of relieves one, why shouldn't I do it? Halloa, *that* was a loud one!"

So it was. It resounded all over the great silence round us. To me it seemed that quite a lot of lions must be prowling round our little lonely party, benighted thus on this far-off desert.

Feverishly the carriers piled grass upon the fires. Cecil reminded me that lions don't often eat people where big game is so abundant as here, and we sat on and on, waiting. Finally, the men started firing off their rifles, for a double purpose—to keep off the lions and let Hymn-Book know where we were. All this time my little faithful black Jane, sat huddled close to me, her poor little tongue hanging from her mouth. When those deep and ominous sounds reached us from the great wilderness around she would stop panting to cock her ears and listen with all her might.

Suddenly—oh, the joy of it!—we heard a faint and distant shout.

The whole of the fifty carriers responded with one yell, throwing more grass on to the fires to show where we were located. Soon we saw a red point of light moving towards us through the blackness. It came from the little camp lantern we had luckily given Hymn-Book, and the O'Flaherty, jumping to his feet, put his hands to his mouth and joyfully bellowed "Hymn-Book!"

Some three hours later, when the moon was high in the heavens, we reached water. First we saw an opal gleam far

ahead ; then we heard it flowing, and no one who has not experienced acute thirst can understand what that sight and sound meant to us.

We simply rushed at it. I could not get to it in time before thoughtful Cecil was hurrying back to me with a pannikin full. I drank and drank, and every one else drank and drank, the carriers lying in a long row, faces down, sucking it up, and the servants the same. The O'Flaherty got bodily into it. Cecil had eight glasses, I think, and little Jane lapped until I thought she'd never stop. The wonder is we did not all drink that desert pool dry !

We slept that night by that thrice-heavenly pool, our tents hurriedly put up in a circle for warmth, for it turned out the coldest night we've had yet. A grass fire was all we could have, and how Jonas cooked some sort of a dinner for our starving selves on grass, with not a twig to help, I don't know, but he did. Good old Jonas !

I need not say we slept soundly that night.

The next morning we moved on here, and are now on a lovely string of deep, fairly clear pools, of which, however, we are not afraid to drink ; for here no human, perhaps, has ever trod before, and so we know the water cannot be contaminated. Our tents are in a line on a slight eminence, the pools are below us, and beyond them lies a wondrous green world, flat as a table, with not even one ant-hill. It stretches away like the boundless ocean to a far-off, dim horizon, upon which, at dawn, specks appear in groups, etched black against the coming day. They grow larger and get clearer, and move slowly on to the plain—a sight to make the heart of the sportsman leap. For it is big game that springs up like this out of the very skyline, and soon, slowly, the sun being high, we watch them while we dress in our tents—zebra, letchwe, roan, oribi, puku, reed-buck, wildebeest, and wild pig ; all are seen at different times in herds. Birds, too, alight in flights on the

pool-banks or sail over our camp, and often help fill the pot. Wild geese, sand-grouse, wild duck, pheasants, partridges, egrets, maribou storks and many more.

“ Valhalla ” we call this camp ; for it is, indeed, a “ happy hunting-ground.”

CHAPTER XIX

OUR sojourn on the Kafue flats was one of the happiest times we had on our travels.

First of all, the desert air was so invigorating and beautiful that we all felt extraordinarily well and in the highest spirits, and it was quite evident by the singing and laughing and general jollification which prevailed amongst the domestics and carriers, congregated on a bit of rising ground a little way off our camp, that they felt the joy of life in them too, and all was happiness and sunshine.

I noticed from this time forth, that I felt much better in health when we were in wide open country with no trees or even bushes, and that in the forests I never felt so well. I believe the whole party insensibly experienced the same. Certainly the servants and carriers seemed twice as bright and willing after we emerged from our bush camps and halted on the great desert. The air was so very pure, it was a delight to draw it into one's lungs. The nights were still cold. Cold enough to want big fires to dine by, and we had to send the carriers many miles back into the forests to fetch wood for cooking and warmth. Every morning Hymn-Book chose twenty men out of the carrier camp and despatched them with axes and rope, much quarrelling and chasing of course taking place as to who should not go and who had already been.

The camp-kitchen was situated between us and the carriers, under the "Chunga-tree," a large thorn tree, visible from

miles away, and a noticeable feature of the landscape, being the only tree far or near. During our quests for game, leading us often many miles distant from our camp, this huge Chunga-tree, spreading great arms over our kitchen, was always our beacon, and but for it we must often have been lost entirely, the whole landscape was so much alike and so bereft of land-marks.

During our stay on the Kafue flats we never saw one human being beside ourselves. We might have been upon some desert island out in mid-ocean, belonging only to its own bird and beast inhabitants, for they were the only life we met. But how they filled our days with joy ! What an eternal wonder it was to see the game-herds slowly moving in the early mornings on to the limitless plain, while, with open tent-doors, we dressed and drank down hot tea preparatory to a long morning of sport and excitement.

We often rose while the stars were still in the sky, and while we dressed, we would talk to each other from our tents.

" Oh ! Look at the dawn on the horizon ! What a beautiful thing the coming day is, in a land where clouds seem to be unknown ! Even the plain is blushing pink ! Cecil, do look out ! "

" Yes," replied he on this particular morning, standing at his tent-door in pyjamas while Big Ben handed him his cup of hot tea, " the sun will soon be up now, and when we can see things clearer we'll decide which way to go, according to the game visible. Ben ! Have you called the O'Flaherty Baas ? "

" I call him, mastah, but he throw boot at me."

" And missed him," shouted our friend from his tent ; " but I'm awake now. I'll be out soon."

In half an hour we each emerged from our tents, and by this time King Sol was well over the horizon, and black dots on the skyline were fast appearing. They looked so like trees that

at first one could not be sure whether, in the clear air of the dawn, a forest, hitherto invisible, was not becoming apparent. All round the arc of the horizon stood these forests of dots, and we watched them long and intently. The Soldier Man had most unfortunately left his field-glasses in Livingstone, packed away by mistake into one of fifteen trunks left stored at Mr. C ——'s, and as we had no idea which trunk they were in it was impossible to send for them even could we have done so. So we had to trust to our eyes for everything and am sure we missed many a good thing by it.

Now, had we had powerful glasses, we could have known at once that the black forests on the skyline were large herds of antelope and zebra. As it was, we had to wait to see if they moved at all on to the plain. We called for more hot tea and sat down outside our tents to drink it and watch the skyline and the plain.

In about twenty minutes the question was solved. The forests had, almost imperceptibly, moved right out on to the plain. The clear rosy sky was visible behind them. It was game !

And now each minute the sight became plainer, as the herds of animals (little dreaming how, from ten long miles away, they were being watched by human eyes) spread themselves about upon the level plains below us, the zebra keeping together in groups, sometimes mixed with wildebeest (who appear to fraternize with zebra) and the several other kinds of buck also keeping and moving along together in groups.

It had a strange, almost wonderful, effect, the way these herds of beautiful and completely wild creatures crept up like this, from over the Edge of the World mornings ! I often stood watching the sight and dreamily wondering what sort of country lay beyond that skyline. If this was lonely and untrodden, what must it be down over that unknown Edge of Beyond ? I longed to penetrate it ! And later we did.

But now time was passing and the sun mounting well in the blue heaven. It was about six o'clock. Hymn-Book and four gun-bearers and half a dozen chosen carriers stood waiting for us at a distance. Cecil and I were going after zebra to-day in one direction, while the O'Flaherty would proceed in the other, so as not to get into each other's way. The carriers were all clamouring to Hymn-Book for more zebra meat, and I wanted to collect zebra skins to cover the seats of black oak dining-room chairs, though in this strange wild life it hardly seemed possible one would ever see an English drawing-room or a padded chair again !

Away to the left of the plain, fed now, in full view, several herds of zebra, perhaps about seven miles away from our camp. Their brilliant stripes always mark them out from a long way off. In between the zebra herds roamed groups of buck of different kinds. We decided that Cecil and I, Hymn-Book, and two gun-bearers and three carriers would go to the west of the plain, and the O'Flaherty with his retinue to the east, where any amount of game was also to be seen.

Jonas came running up. "When would our Highnesses want breakfast ? Please show Jonas by pointing to where the sun would be in the sky."

We replied that we could not tell. Jonas and the hawk-eyed carriers must watch the plain, and when they beheld us returning, Jonas could judge for himself about getting breakfast ready. It might be ten, eleven, twelve, nay, even four in the afternoon that we were seen returning. On the Kafue flats who shall prophesy ? So old Jonas stood stiff and gave his funny military salute (learnt Heaven knows where), and returned to his thorn-tree kitchen, there to squat on the ground with his brethren, taking turns to puff at the ancient pipe handed round, the tobacco varying from pinches of the real stuff (obtained, no doubt, from the Baas' pouches) to all

sorts of other stuff that would smoulder and send up smoke, dried grass being the last substitute.

We bade the O'Flaherty farewell and good luck, and commenced the descent to the pools, when I suddenly saw standing quietly (gazing at us and at the tents, the kitchen fire, and the human beings, with much wonder) a great big queer-looking animal, the size of a large English bull and coal-black in colour. It had an almost fabulous appearance. A funny old face and a kind of mane round its neck, and its head looked too big for its body. It was, in fact, a blue wildebeest, and how it had got there, so close up to our camp, away from all its fellows, one could not say. I only knew I felt very sorry for it and knew it was about to pay with its life for its temerity.

The moment I had seized Cecil's arm and pointed to it, whispering, "What's that?" I regretted my action, and felt utterly cruel, for as he and Hymn-Book started to stalk it, creeping from one ant-hill to another, the poor old innocent creature stood gazing at me, unconscious of harm, and not one bit frightened. They told me to stand quite still and thus keep the wildebeest's attention to myself, and though I longed now to wave it some sign to bolt, and save its skin while it could, I obeyed, and stood stock still, looking at it, while it looked back at me. It was not three hundred yards away, but to make a detour to get near it from a large ant-hill close by it, they had to crawl and creep quite a long way round, and the time seemed endless to me. I longed for it to be all over and felt really *bad*.

At last I saw the two stalkers crawling up the big ant-hill close to which the poor old wildebeest stood, its head still turned in my direction. I knew now it had very little chance, and when I looked at the wide free world beyond and around it, and knew that it would never roam under God's blue sky any more, a mist came over my eyes.

Yet I helped to kill it all I could, for I knew that if I had made one movement it would have probably made off.

Now a steady eye was intently looking along a shining rifle barrel resting on the ant-hill, and there came a crash, and the wildebeest, apparently unharmed, galloped furiously away down towards the pools. But another crash followed, and then one more, and down he went, almost head over heels. The two men ran up, and I saw Hymn-Book's big knife in the air. Being a Mahomedan, he may not eat of any animal's flesh unless he has himself "hal-lalled" it, as we call it in India. I turned away as he bent over the prostrate bull and cut its throat from ear to ear. When I got up its eyes were wide open, but it was quite dead. I never saw such a beautiful blue as its eyes. They were like two great jewels of vivid colour set in its strange old black face.

Hymn-Book got upon the ant-hill and waved and shouted to Jonas to send carriers to convey the wildebeest up to the camp, and while he did this a flight of sand-grouse passed over our heads and two paid the penalty.

Then we descended to the pools, waded through a shallow part, and found ourselves upon the Real Flats, so called, by us, because the plateau higher up, upon which we camped, was dotted with ant-hills, while the lower plain had none, but stretched from horizon to horizon, one unbroken expanse of short green turf, while here and there came two or three miles of high yellow grass, very soft and feathery and very pretty to look at.

The zebra herd could still be seen, feeding to the west of the plain, and we made in that direction, walking miles, and sometimes finding ourselves in wet green bog halfway up to our knees. Mosquitoes swarmed over the surface of these, and bit horribly. Then we would emerge into a mile or two of the yellow grass, far higher than our heads. All sorts of live things lived in these grass forests, and as one pushed

through, one heard them scurrying away here and there, and I got a jump when (my companion being rather a long way in front) there rushed past my very feet two wild pig, grunting furiously in their pathetic anxiety to avoid my notice. A few minutes later, the Soldier Man having stopped and returned to me, we saw two lovely little pointed horns in the grass, and then two more. And two sweet frightened little faces gazed at us with great soft dark eyes full of terror! They were two oribi. They were fired at, but with high bounds, almost sometimes clearing the grass, they got away, and I could only hope were not wounded.

"This may have frightened off the zebra herd." But I replied that they must still be almost too far away to hear shots, and we pushed on.

Coming to an ant-hill, Hymn-Book climbed up it, and informed us that the herd was still quietly feeding, now some two miles distant from us, so, slightly altering our course, we pushed on, now in long grass, now on open plain. The sun was getting high and it was hot, and we halted once for ten minutes to drink water from our canvas water-bag, carried by a carrier, and out came the meerschaum for a smoke, the match almost setting fire to the grass.

Then we rose and once more went on our way, discussing many things as we went—religion, theosophy, the suffrage question, and marriage being favourite topics. I always champion my own sex in the two latter, and feel very strongly the wrongs under which they suffer, especially the impossible attitude of men in marriage and sex questions, *i.e.* that they may do what they like, and women must keep silence. As it is impossible that they can do "what they like" without the aid of women (as well, say, you can make toast without bread), it is plain that an equal standard must be raised, and only Woman's voice in Politics can do it. The attitude of the Church (run by men, like all else) especially angers

women. It attacks divorce, but refuses apparently to lay its finger on the whole evil, the unequal marriage-laws, under which husbands may have love affairs galore if they wish and the outraged wife can do nothing to free herself, except to let herself care for, and trust with her life, another man, and let her husband divorce her. The whole thing is truly wicked.

But then the Church is *He* throughout—not *She* as it is called.

The English law is so cunningly contrived that unless the woman hides from the court the great fact that her husband was unfaithful first, the divorce is refused !

So, for every one's sake, all the early part of the story is hushed up, and the husband, having posed in the divorce court as an injured and innocent person, the judge (often, no doubt, not in the least taken in) gives the husband "the relief he is entitled to."

My companion and I were getting quite excited over the subject (he, like me, abhors these injustices to women, and says women must alter them) when Hymn-Book, who was not interested in the English marriage-law, but only in having zebra-liver for his dinner, made signs to us from ahead that we must stop talking if we didn't want to frighten the herd off entirely.

Parting the grass, and leaning forward, he informed us as we came softly up that we were now within a few hundred yards of a large herd of zebra, numbering perhaps two hundred or more.

Hearing this, we all went down on our hands and knees, and crawled along for some minutes. Then we came to some ant-hills on the edge of where the long grass ended, and we got behind these, the two men just in front of mine.

Jane had accompanied us as usual that morning and had been vastly pleased and excited all the way, and during the shooting of the wildebeest, "Milk" had had literally

to hold her to earth and close her jaw with his hand or we should inevitably have beheld the wildebeest vanishing horizonwards with Jane at its heels. Now it became my business to hold Jane down and keep her quiet behind the ant-hill, she struggling frantically to get free. The "Captain" and Hymn-Book had crawled up on to their ant-hill and remained watching the herd with every appearance of pleasure. I was too low down to see them, so when I had almost sprained my wrists over Jane, I signed to "Milk" to come and hold her, and I very cautiously climbed my own ant-hill, and was soon quietly seated on its summit. A really beautiful sight met my eyes.

CHAPTER XX

ALL round me stretched the plain, with big expanses upon it of the high, feathery golden and brown and pink grass, giving a beautiful effect in the warm morning sun as it softly waved and whispered in the breeze.

Here and there came open spaces carpeted with soft green turf, and down upon one of these, about a mile square, I found myself looking now, and upon a herd of zebra, males, females, and little ones—the latter, dear little creatures, keeping, of course, very close to their pretty mothers.

They all fed, occasionally raising their heads to listen, as if rather uneasy. Alas, they had good reason to be ! There must have been two or three hundred of them, all told, and they looked so beautiful thus, in their completely wild state, and in such numbers, and the sight caused one to realize what far wilds we had got into, and how untrodden and untouched this wonderful land must be, that I felt I would cheerfully forego my zebra-skin chairs not to break up the peace and beauty of the picture. Such a great silence brooded here ! Far, far away, a dark edge to the plain betokened bush country not visible from our camp. What a glorious life these animals led ! What would we not give to lead it always too ! And here had we mortals come, to teach them for the first time of our civilization and cruelty !

All unconscious of our presence (the first humans they would ever have seen), they stood in groups, ones and twos, and cropped their innocent morning meal under the African sky.

While I thus ruminated, my companion, from his ant-hill, got ready to kill the zebra he had picked out for its doom. It was a beauty, a male, standing by itself apart from the herd. Its shape was perfect. Now and then it moved with slow and easy grace, wandering over the grass, then stooping its head to feed.

I watched its would-be destroyer, and when I saw his finger on the trigger I kept my eyes on the zebra.

As he fired, the entire herd wildly stampeded and passed our ant-hills with such a thunder of hoofs that I slipped and fell off my ant-hill, and next moment found myself full length on the ground with hundreds of zebras flashing past me in countless stripes ! Every moment I thought my brains would be dashed out by those hoofs flying past me and sending the turf and the dust into the air like chaff. Several times a hoof came so near my head that I felt it whizz past, and my hat (luckily not my felt), which had fallen off, caught in one hoof and was carried away and reduced to a mere ruin.

Cecil, seeing me in this plight, rushed towards me, but I wasn't hurt, and I struggled up and called out, "It's all right ! Don't wait for me !"

The herd had now passed, and the wounded zebra was amongst them, but at present could not be singled out. I was on my feet again, and we and the servants all started to follow the herd, knowing that our wounded quarry would soon be falling out, unable to keep pace with the rest.

In a few seconds the herd were out of shot, but one fine male was lagging. Slower and heavier it went, poor thing, and fell farther and farther back, and I believe I was getting ready for a tear at its piteous plight when, to my amazement, it dropped to a trot, then to a walk, and then, stopping short altogether, it started to quietly feed, one leg nearly useless, a most amazing sight. And now followed a very uncomfortable time, for whenever we approached the zebra it

galloped on a few yards, and kept us going like this for miles, towards the bush country.

The Soldier Man wanted, of course, to finish it off, if only for its own sake, for it could never live with the herd again—they would expel it. So we followed on hour after hour, but could not get near enough to it to kill it.

I was by this time worn out. Our water was all drunk and the sun getting cruelly hot. As for our camp on the eminence, the thorn-tree was now a mere dot against the sky and the tents looked like a group of little white button mushrooms. It was suggested that I sat down and rested, "Milk" to take charge of me, while the others followed the wounded zebra; or else to let it go and take its chance.

But this seemed so cruel. I said no; nor would I consent to be left alone with the savage "Milk," who had anything but a pleasant countenance. We were miles from the camp, I should lose Cecil altogether, and Heaven only knew how it might all end.

So we pushed on, every moment hoping for a shot at the zebra and so finish it; and meanwhile the sun mounted to midday in the heavens and it was evident the poor thing was bent on making for the cool and shade of the bush, now distant from us only a short way.

"You will get it when we reach the bush," I kept saying, and plodded on, feeling more dead than alive.

Hymn-Book said we would find water if we went on now. He could see certain dark-green trees which always, or nearly always, meant water. So it seemed best in every way to go on.

It must have been nearly 2 P.M. before we reached the forest, and all that time the wounded zebra had kept well ahead of us. It evidently longed for the shade and coolness, poor creature. When it reached the forest it entered the trees, and as we finally came up we saw it lying down, bleeding,

but when it saw us it struggled up and moved on. How gladly now we would have let it go unharmed ! One's heart ached to see it. But it was awful to think of the lingering death that awaited it, and so Cecil knelt down behind a tree and gave it another bullet. It half fell, then struggled again to its feet, and this time we could see that its hind-leg was quite disabled from Cecil's last shot ; but now, to my renewed amazement, it sat quietly down, we being hidden behind the trees. It sniffed at the grass and did not appear distressed !

A sense of comfort came over me, for I was sure now that the *non-domesticated* animals do not feel pain quite as we know it. Let no cruel vivisector take heart of grace by this, to ease his conscience when slowly torturing terrified dogs and guinea-pigs. Though I joined a shooting-trip and, having joined it, did as others did (and never, I must confess, felt it was right), still no one in our party ever knowingly tortured an animal, or let a wounded one get away *if it could possibly be prevented*.

In order to save the zebra a lingering death we all risked our lives upon this occasion, for, to make a long story short, we were out in the bush all night—a wretched experience, with the roar of lions plainly heard all round us. The zebra was killed, after following it again farther into the bush.

By this time it was 4 P.M. and I was too utterly done up to move another step, and no water could be found.

As I refused to be left alone, there was nothing for it but to send Hymn-Book and one carrier to find the camp and bring back water and my machila. They declared they would be back before the sun set, and they departed, leaving me extended on Mother Earth and my companion seated by me.

Well—we were there all night, he with his rifle ready loaded. A night to remember, in truth, for, in addition to

the lions roaring (an awful sound at any time, and now soul-shaking), we were parched with thirst and faint with hunger.

The gun-bearers lit us a fire, and that was our only comfort all night, though the very sight of it increased our thirst. But the night was cold and we might have died without it, and undoubtedly it kept off wild beasts. I lay with my head on some grass, too wretched to even discuss suffrage or theosophy !

When the dawn came, after hours of darkness that had seemed quite endless, we got up and tottered away to where the bush merged into the plain, and a carrier got into a tree to see if there were any signs of the rescuing party.

To our great joy he reported that he could see, far away on the plain, black dots he believed to be men.

So he descended and a gun was fired off to show them where we were, and in about two hours more they all emerged, carrying my machila and accompanied by the O'Flaherty, from out the yellow grass about a mile away.

Oh, what a welcome sight that was ! The O'Flaherty's "Coo-ee !" was as the loveliest music ! I couldn't reply, I lay on the ground too weak to move, but some one coo-eed back and I was told to bear up ; "they were carrying our canvas water-bag full."

How we drank when they arrived ! How we ate of the cold buck-flesh and biscuits Jonas had sent ! and listened to how Hymn-Book and the carrier had got lost themselves, and the anxiety the O'Flaherty had gone through all night long alone in camp.

Then they put me into my machila, and by ten o'clock we were safe at the Chunga once more.

* * * * *

The next morning, I being quite recovered, we trekked round the edge of the Real flats to the east, for we found the

game getting shy where we were, and the herds no longer came up feeding to within a mile or two of our camp as they had done in the beginning. The pools, too, were no longer fringed with water-fowl and other birds, though not many a day passed but we had a game course to our evening meal of some kind or other.

One morning Cecil and the O'Flaherty, sitting up in their beds, both simultaneously saw on the marshes below a lot of wild duck, and with one shout each leapt from his bed and, seizing his shot-gun, ran in pyjamas down to the pools, waded through, and began to make a detour, each in opposite directions, to encircle the duck, who flapped about over the marsh thoroughly enjoying themselves, but as they approached flew off a little way, and so on. I stood in my dressing-gown and watched the two men's figures grow smaller and smaller, as they followed the duck, till they were lost in the yellow haze of the rising sun. On this occasion they were out on that plain in their pyjamas till past 10 A.M., and you should have seen their pyjamas when they got back. They were black slime almost to their necks. Big Ben had to do a great wash in the pools that morning, but we had four fine duck for the table.

Now, however, neither birds nor beasts would approach our camp, and so we struck tents one lovely morning and did a long trek to what looked like a huge lake to the east of the flats. From a high ant-hill the expanse of water was as plain as possible, evidently about ten miles away. Much delighted, we decided to make for it, and all day we trekked in its direction on the edge of the Upper Flats, and as we proceeded we saw large quantities of game. The lake, however, always receded! And when we had gone fully ten miles we realized that we had been taken in by a mirage. They are common on the Kafue Sahara, as on all deserts. Cruel alluring visions, like many of earth's hopes, receding

always as one approaches ! Yet sometimes the emblem deepens in meaning. We have stood and seen the whole beautiful vision rise into the air, heavenwards, as if there its reality may yet be found.

Our lake, however, on that day must have descended to some thirsty infernal region below, for it certainly never rose, yet vanished.

At sundown we found ourselves about twelve miles from our last camp on a similar fringe of pools to those we had left, but the great inland lake which the O'Flaherty had promised us we should be bathing in to-morrow had never existed. It had looked miles broad !

However, we were glad to find water at all. Its presence or absence is a source naturally of great anxiety to travellers in these deserts. The pools were muddy because of the game, which evidently, by their thick spoor, came here in large numbers to drink, and must have been in the water quite recently, or it would have had time to clear.

While the tents were pitched, we went down to examine the spoor, and it was evident we were in even better sporting country than before. There was spoor of sable, lechwe, oribi, wildebeest, wild pig, and zebra ; also on pools near, sat quantities of birds, including huge marabout storks, and they simply took no notice of us. They had never seen humans before, of course, and until they hear shots evince no fear. I always believe if one went amongst them with no intent to harm them that they would come round one and become tame and friendly. I knew a Theosophist who once sojourned in some forest in America for some weeks. He had a gun with him, but only for self-protection. He told me that as he sat at his breakfast the birds from the trees around came hopping on to his table to be fed, and at last became so tame that when he called them they would come, and even

alight upon his chair and shoulder. Now, I should like to do a trek of peace and friendliness like that ! This shooting and killing was not to my liking.

I hope I shall not suffer in some way for having violated my conscience, but there is no doubt I often and often violated it. First, I felt very diffident of spoiling Cecil and the O'Flaherty's pleasure, and they had come a long way and spent a lot of money, and it seemed such a shame to make them uncomfortable. So I smothered my feelings often. At other times, I must confess, the fascination of the chase took hold of me, too, and I let myself go, and, barring inevitable moments of pain and regret, I enjoyed it and felt I could understand and appreciate the joy that men take in these things. This may have been my lower self speaking ; I suppose it really was, though I expect some man reading this will say, " Well, I never—what cheek ! Isn't that like a Suffragette ? "

Our new camp was as charming as the one near the Chunga-tree, now visible and deserted a long way off.

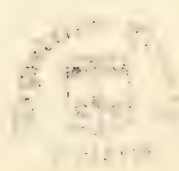
The flats here were simply alive with game, and on the second day Cecil got a roan with fine horns, and it was brought back to camp with great rejoicings.

The next day he wounded an even finer roan, right out on the upper flats, about four miles from our camp. Unfortunately, it was not dead, only badly wounded, and he had not noticed that he had no more ammunition.

I had not accompanied him that morning, having " trek " articles to write for the *Cape Times* editor, with whom, while in Cape Town, I had arranged for a series. So I spent a quiet morning at the door of my tent, writing at my little three-ply wood table, and every now and then looking up and drinking in the scene below me. The plain, the blue sky, and the game dotted here and there feeding, miles and miles away.

Suddenly a shadow fell over my paper. It was the Soldier Man's gun-bearer, and I realized that he had now been out many hours and was not back. What had happened ?

The man handed me a note, which he had carried, according to custom, in a cleft-stick. It was from Cecil.



CHAPTER XXI

“ETHE—send me ten more rounds of ammunition. You’ll find it inside my brown-leather gun-case. I’ve wounded a sable with horns finer than yesterday’s, and I can’t finish him off. Send man back quick.”

I glanced at the top of the note. It was inscribed 8 A.M. and it was now 11.30. What on earth had the man been doing? I called Hymn-Book to ask him, for I was very indignant. The mere thought of Cecil sitting by that wounded buck in the hot sun without food or water or shade himself, and, above all, the sufferings of the animal, made me feel ill, and this particular gun-bearer was such a lazy, insolent brute that I felt almost certain he had slept or idled on the way. What could Cecil be thinking and doing? How far was it? “Oh, quite four miles,” said the man, and he declared he had “lost his way.”

I dispatched him at once with the ammunition and a note, saying what time Cecil’s message had reached me; and I wondered would he ever find his master again, and would Cecil go wandering about, seeking the camp and lose his way too? The upper ant-hill flats are a dangerous region on which to lose your way. The awful sameness of the landscape with its innumerable ant-hills, all alike, make it far more easy to lose yourself in, than the lower plain, which is open all round, so that you can see and be seen from a great distance. There is no water on the upper plain. It is a region which is the very abomination of desolation for the lost

traveller, and here was the absent one on it all alone ! I felt anxious, and found I could do no more writing. Suppose night came, and he was not back ?

The O'Flaherty came in from hunting and we had a late breakfast together, he trying to cheer me and promising he would go and look for Cecil, and I would go too in my machila if he had not turned up by one o'clock noon. I refused utterly to be left in the camp alone. Suppose the O'Flaherty got lost too. Suppose both men got hurt, murdered, killed ? What would become of me alone amongst fifty or sixty savages ? Often this thought haunted me, and I felt I should be glad when, in a short time from now, another woman would be of our party—*i.e.* "The Insular Miss," who before long now would be out from England, and was to join us at Kafue River Station, on the Cape to Cairo Railway, which cuts through this lone land, though a long, long way from where we now were.

I could not enjoy any breakfast, I was too anxious ; and when one o'clock arrived and the sun was high over our heads I declared that I was sure the gun-bearer had murdered him for sake of his rifle and watch, and that Heaven knew if we should ever see him or the gun-bearer again.

I dragged the O'Flaherty from buck-liver and Livingstone bacon, called my machila, the O'Flaherty filled his pockets with ammunition, and we departed, I in the machila and plenty of wraps in case we were out all night. We made Hymn-Book accompany us and several carriers, and we also took food and water sufficient to last twenty-four hours. We had no idea which way Cecil had gone, but Hymn-Book "thought" it was "over there," so we wended our steps that way, occasionally firing a shot, hoping he would hear it.

This was worse than being lost in company as before.

The idea of any disaster having overtaken him, alone, was

the trouble, for at least two or three together would comfort each other, come what might.

About three o'clock the O'Flaherty climbed an ant-hill to prospect the scene. So far, no sight or sound of the lost one; and he said we ought to go back, as at this rate we should all be lost together. He got on to the top of a high ant-hill and, after gazing round some moments, said in a low and very excited tone, "I say! come up here!" and, stretching down a hand, he pulled me up beside him. He then pointed down to a spot about two miles from where we stood. A large animal lay there asleep, or dead—impossible to say which.

At this sight my terrors were renewed a hundred-fold. We were too far (oh, for field-glasses now!) to make sure was the animal a buck or a lion. No words can describe what I felt. I nearly fell off the ant-hill.

"Now, now," said my companion, looking very white himself and hushing his voice to a whisper, "I expect it's all right. Don't go *imagining* things."

Neither of us cared to even voice the fear at our hearts. If a lion . . .

"What will you do?" I breathed.

"Nothing," said he; "what can I do, one man alone, out here in the wilderness with a woman to look after? I sha'n't fire at him or go any nearer him, if that's what you mean. There is nothing to do but to go back. It may be a dead buck. Anyhow, there is nothing else to be done. Come!"

"Do you . . . do you . . . see . . . those . . . white . . . things . . . bones . . . near him? . . . *are* they . . . bones?"

"Hoped you wouldn't notice 'em," said the O'Flaherty. "Look here, into your machila! quick! Back we've got to get double-quick time. We are doing no good out here, and soon it will be evening and then night, and I'm simply not

going to bivouac out here all night with no fire and four shaking cowards of carriers. Hymn-Book ! ” (to that domestic, standing breathless on another ant-hill) “ lead back to camp ! ”

It was a horrid two hours back. My mind was all in a whirl. If Cecil was indeed lost !

At last our camp came into view. . . . I sat up and looked at it, and then fell back in my machila and my heart sent up a prayer.

When, suddenly, a shot rang out from the distant camp, and the O’Flaherty yelled, “ Right O ! he’s safe ! ” I scrambled out of the machila and ran and ran towards the dear safe camp, to where, welcome as flowers in May, the wanderer stood upon an ant-hill himself and shouted to us “ Right O ! ”

* * * * *

He explained it all over the late tea-table, the sun setting over the lower plain like a great crimson oblong football. For some reason on this desert the sun often assumed this peculiar shape as it set. It was a very curious sight.

“ Directly we reach the railway I’ll discharge that fellow. Thanks to him I’ve lost, I expect, a record pair of roan horns, and what you will think worse, Etke, I had to leave my wounded sable to die alone. I sat there near him *hours*. No sign of the gun-bearer returning. I’d have cut his throat, but we had, most unfortunately, not brought knives as usual. It was horrible to see him lying there mortally wounded, and I gave it as long as I could. Then I marked an ant-hill near as best I could with twigs and a pocket-handkerchief, so as to find it again, and went off to find my way back to camp if possible. I reached this half an hour before you did. As for that lion you think you saw . . . ”

“ Oh, for a cert. he’d eaten your sable or part of it,” said the O’Flaherty, “ he lay gorged. Mrs. Suff. here (he often

called me that for short) was dead certain it was you inside of him, and really it didn't seem too unlikely, you know. Your bones lay all round his majesty. *Her* face was a study. I didn't know whether to laugh—or weep."

"It was *not* one of the nicest moments of my life," said I, and then we sat far into the darkness and talked the whole adventure over. Big Ben made up a great fire of logs brought from the distant bush by the carriers, and its flames leaped up, sending sparks to the velvet sky where stars were spangled in hundreds. We had given orders that the fire was to be kept going all night, for no one quite liked the thought of that lion asleep a few miles away.

At 4 A.M. next morning the two Baas, with Hymn-Book and carriers, departed to try to find the record sable, but they never even struck the marked ant-hill again. Once you lose your locality on the Kafue flats, no white man, and but few natives, can ever find it more.

The one thing left to hope was (after a sigh from both men at the loss of a pair of horns breaking, perhaps, all records) that the lion had indeed finished off the sable.

The part that made me ponder was—how near that lion must have been to Cecil as he sat those long hours alone watching the wounded buck!

CHAPTER XXII

(From my Diary)

July 24, 1910. The trophies of the chase come in thick and fast, and yesterday the O'Flaherty took a photo of us (Cecil and me) surrounded by skins, horns, and domestics. I begin to suspect that the O'Flaherty is not the expert in photography he has led me to believe, he made so much fuss over that photo and so many mistakes. Three times when we thought it was all over, and we had all but dispersed, he found he had made some error and we had to sit again. We got very cross, and Cecil, who wanted to be off hunting, emitted a real loud swear as, for the third time, our kodak-expert (after examining his camera) shouted, "Dash my buttons! I forgot to turn off the last film again!"

I hadn't yet made much use of the pretty little rifle bought for me in Cape Town by Cecil. I had often carried it, but killed nothing, till one morning, seeing some black-and-white Rhodesian crows hopping about on the other side of the pools, I was persuaded by my two companions to see if I could hit one of them. To my great surprise I did. One of the birds fell over dead. So elated was I at the compliments I received at the feat (for they were over fifty yards away) that the lust of blood got hold of me, regrets vanished, and I wandered round the rest of the morning seeing what I could kill. I had a shot at a zebra which fed on the outside of a herd about half a mile away, but missed it, and the herd stampeded. Then I returned to camp, and, seeing more black-and-white specks on the far pool banks, I carefully

aimed at them and fired. Never shall I forget my horror when they turned out to be Big Ben and Early To-morrow in their black lungies and white jackets, doing our week's washing in the pool reserved for such functions. (Our drinking-pool was farther up.) As I fired, Big Ben first leapt up into the air and then fell, and was followed by the second boy, both giving one long dying yell too awful to hear ! Then they lay flat—and moved no more.

My shrieks brought every one running. I nearly dropped with agitation myself.

"I've killed them ! But I thought they were crows ! It was the black and white specks on the far bank, and the sun in my eyes."

Cecil got me a chair and a glass of water and tried to calm me, while down to the pool rushed the O'Flaherty, Hymn-Book, Jonas, and the fifty carriers in a bunch, Jonas crying "Aie ! Aie !" and tearing out bits of his hair in anticipation of the expected funeral of his "brudders" two. You see, having told us they were his "brudders," it now had to be kept up.

"I shall be hanged," said I, half-sobbing in my chair. "See how I killed that crow at fifty yards. I'm certain to have hit them."

"Come, come," said the Soldier Man, fanning me with an old newspaper, "no Suffragette ought to mind things of this sort. Anyhow, you wouldn't be hanged, only imprisoned, and then you can do a hunger strike."

(I knew that was coming.)

"How can you be so cruel as to joke about it ?" I began, and then stood up to breathlessly watch proceedings below. The O'Flaherty had reached the two prostrate table-boys and was kneeling down to examine them, and a ghastly pause for me took place.

"Are they dead ?" I called. "Please tell me."



See page 138

"HYMN-BOOK" AND "LANG-WAN" BRINGING IN GAME



TENTS AND TROPHIES AT KAFUE SAHARA

"Have you a hatpin up there ?" shouted back the physician "Jonas, run up to the missis and bring back her long hatpin. I soon see if your brudders dead."

The hatpin having arrived, the O'Flaherty rolled up his shirtsleeves and prepared to plunge it into the leg of one of the corpses, and straightway, without a moment's warning, both the defunct sat up and implored mercy.

I could have danced for joy, and the O'Flaherty bawled out, "Alive, alive O! You've cheated the hangman *this* time."

The two boys had to be assisted up the incline and doctored with brandy in large quantities.

Cecil also thought it politic that I should present each one with a new blanket, a dried and cured roan-skin (to lie on by night), and a pot of strawberry jam thrown in as a soother.

These marks of my contrition being tendered, the servants and carriers sitting in a ring round the heroes, broke into songs of praise—I supposed at my prowess, but the O'Flaherty, who is learning Mashakalumbwe, said the burden of their song was, "a miss is as good as a mile."

I was so shaken over the event that I went to bed for the rest of the day.

July 26. We are spending more time in camp and less out hunting, and it's nice for a change. The O.C. superintends the curing of his horns and skins. I never go near the horns if I can help it, for the best way to clean them is to let the maggots eat the flesh off them, after which they are boiled hard for a day, and I once found this performance, the horns being oribi and small, taking place in the soup saucepan.

The O'Flaherty spends much of his time with Hymn-Book, who is teaching him the Mashakalumbwe language (or pretending to), and also administers initiations into the mysteries

of the desert life around us and the deceptions produced by distance and atmosphere in Central Africa.

“And what are those specks over there, Hymn-Book, on the skyline? Those are buck, I bet—eh?”

On principle Hymn-Book, as mentor, disagrees. His position demands it, or he can't be said to be teaching.

“Those not buck, sah! Those is trees.”

“Well, then, what are those over there? Those are trees, if you like!”

“No, sah. Those is buck.”

And when the O'Flaherty desperately scratches his head, his instructor adds:

“Here on Kafue flats, when Baas sees trees it is buck, and when he sees buck it is trees.”

“Oh,” said the pupil, “is that how it is?”

So now the O'Flaherty, when he sees buck, leaves them alone (even if they are moving) and goes obediently after trees standing stock still.

Our time here is fast drawing to a close. Only a few more days and we must lift our tents and leave this glorious Valhalla to go and meet the Insular Miss, *i.e.* Miss Britannia Orion from England, the fourth member of our trek party. It will be a hard trek and a very bad one for water, and very loath are we to move from these fascinating regions.

We have all often said how much we would like to stop months out here—but it is too utterly removed from every need of life and human beings to make it feasible, and in the hot weather and rainy season we should be cut off entirely and the fever would be a great risk.

But at present I can imagine no more glorious life. I always loved the great open spaces of this earth. Get me in amongst bricks and mortar, or even trees, beautiful as trees are, and my soul and body feel cramped and shut up. Cecil feels the same. I can't think at all. My thoughts won't fly!

There is no room. My spirit frets and droops. Only half of me seems to work. Had I never come to Africa, or gone to the Egyptian desert, I would have lived and died and never have known the joy of God's open spaces with only the "blue tent" (so we call our sky in this fair desert) for covering! I knew it all first, this joy, years ago in Egypt. But it lasted so short a while and I was so young that I had not then woken up.

Then I came to Africa, and found myself first on the high veldt! Heavens! what a feeling! Something very dimly, I imagine, of what we shall feel when the supreme moment comes that our imprisoned soul soars free of its cage of clay. Liberated suddenly, never had one guessed before what lay all close around us! Yet it was there! Now it is here! And a great wide wisdom pours in! One suddenly understands everything, and nothing and nobody is ever quite the same mystery again; not people, nor motives, nor nature, nor earth, nor heaven.

"Where I was blind, now I can see."

This is, I believe, what the open veldt or desert does, in greater or less degree, for all who are ready for it in any way.

* * * * *

It is the last evening of this camp on the Kafue flats, and I have been standing at my tent-door watching the sun set over the level skyline.

As he sank slowly he was of the colour of a pink flame, and he again stretched out, as he touched the horizon, into oblong shape curious to behold.

Cecil, a dark figure upon the vastness, moved along the edge of the water-pools, gun in hand, indefatigable sportsman!

A lovely lily-white flock of egrets sat round one pool, apparently contemplating in its quiet opal mirror the reflection of the pink sky above.

A shot rang out, and one beautiful bird fell, then fluttered

up again and tried to fly away in safety to the vanishing sun. But it dropped to earth, and its death occurred as the sun dropped off the edge of the world into the unknown. As the sun sank, it, too, sank back upon the banks and lay still. I can never forget the sense of passionate self-reproach that came over me.

I saw Cecil go and pick it up.

I had asked him to kill me one "for my hat." Those two things occurring together, the End of the Day and that harmless, beautiful life going out with it, into darkness and the unknown, and all to please me, to decorate my hat. Was this not a thought to cause one to think earnestly? I felt rather sad and thoughtful all the evening.

Now darkness descends slowly upon the scene, and, one by one, fifty little wood fires burn up to the sky quietly, as the carriers prepare each his small evening meal.

We shall be far away by this hour to-morrow, and perhaps never again will human feet tread here.

The carriers break into a sleepy lullaby kind of song :

Wo ! Kunda !

Kurry na yo !

It swings slowly, like a church bell.

And the plain has got swallowed up into the night, and far, far away a lion roars.

CHAPTER XXIII

It was time, and high time, to be making for the spot at which, by letters from Livingstone, we had finally arranged to meet the Insular Miss. And behold us once more halting at our old Chunga Camp, which we had to pass again on our way to a place named Etebbe, our next destination. We had a hard week's trek before us, if we were to be at Kafue River Station in time to receive the Miss. It would be an awful thing if she arrived before we did, for though the trysting-place was certainly dignified by the name of "railway station" we understood that it was a hut in the middle of forests. A tiny store, three or four white men only, and not a corner for the new-comer from England to put her head into. So we had only halted at the Chunga Camp two days, just to rest our carriers and selves, and furthermore to map out our route with the aid of the guide and Hymn-Book.

Our last afternoon tea was going on, and I had entered into my diary, "Back at the Chunga Camp. Leaving at dawn to-morrow."

Always will it remain in our memory as "Chunga," because of its one distinctive feature, *the* tree of the Kafue Sahara, and "Chunga" means "thorn-tree."

"I feel almost sad," said I, as I emerged from my tent upon the O'Flaherty shouting out "Tea!" and took my seat at the table; "I have been sitting at my tent-door as I looked out over the flats, and wondered shall any of us ever see this spot again."

"Bless us!" remarked the O'Flaherty, devouring bread and jam, "we've lots more fun ahead of us. For my part I ain't sorry to be re-entering the bush country. Makes a change."

"I love the air out here on this desert," said I, "never breathed by man before. I always did love deserts and open places."

The day before we start trekking again, Hymn-Book and the guide are called up, our map is spread out on the camp-table and a big confab takes place.

Tea being over, including "Jane's" (who has a nice taste in tea and never allows you to forget her saucerful), Cecil called for the table to be cleared, and "the map" brought out.

"Hymn-Book!" he next shouted, "find that guide and come here! And tell the carriers and servants that we strike camp to-morrow morning at four sharp."

Hymn-Book, rising from some carpentering, stood up and bawled the good news to the carriers and servants in the distance, and a hum of delight went up, for at this rate we should reach Etebbe in time for them to get nicely drunk at the annual beer festival now going on at every village we come to. Then we opened our map, expressly drawn for us by an obliging Livingstone man. One would think, if anything in the world should be correct, it should be a map, but our mapmaker evidently considered that a detail.

For instance, he confuses our movements by having marked a lot of the places and rivers, hills and valleys, in the wrong localities. Some which should be north of the Kafue River are south and those to the south are north. Some landmarks which are really in North-Eastern Rhodesia are shown in our map as being in North-Western Rhodesia—about eight hundred miles difference!

We shouldn't have known all this if a Native Commissioner hadn't told us and made what alterations he could for us,

though he overlooked some of the errors. We still spread this precious map out on the table when we are about to trek, but there is a distinct feeling of distrust concerning it. Will that river really be there, or is it all the time flowing merrily in Nyassaland or up near Uganda? As it's the only water marked for a long, arduous, thirsty trek through the wilderness, its presence (or absence elsewhere) is of some moment, and causes many sleepless hours the night before a move.

Finally a spirit of recklessness seizes us. We'll make for that river and try our luck. As the O'Flaherty philosophically reminds us, "If it's there it's there, and if it isn't it isn't," and we have now (to cheer ourselves and to keep the uncertainty of life and Livingstone maps before us) inscribed that same saying in red ink at the top of our dear old chart.

To-day the sun, setting over the vast silent flats, illumines the red-letter words with rather a sinister light.

The guide and all the servants and half the carriers called to consult, and already hearing in imagination the beer-drums thrumming, said our way to the Kafue River lay first past Etebbe. On the map was marked a village called Syngala. Would it not be better to go round that way, reach the Kafue River, and then trek along it through Lord Wolverton's and the Duke of Westminster's farms, where we should be in touch with some sort of civilization, people to tell us where to go next, and water all the way? But Hymn-Book says, emphatically, "Follow map, everybody get lost. Die." And so we decide for Etebbe, and must do it in one march somehow as no water lies between. How many miles distant it is not one soul can tell us.

We are up long before the stars have got snuffed out of the sky by the coming sun, long before one streak of dawn appears like an angel's wing upon the far, flat horizon. It feels like the middle of the night, and is very cold. Hot tea is brought to the tents, and we hear the O'Flaherty groaning

at having to leave his snug bed and declaring that next time he comes on trek in Central Africa he'll have eighteen carriers to carry his camp-bed with him asleep in it on occasions like this.

"Cheer up, O'Flaherty!" says Cecil, as we all assemble at a breakfast for which we have to grope, the lamps being all packed and only a dying twig-fire near by, which no one has time to attend to; "look at that orange-coloured moon. The sun will soon be up now, and you will be pleased we made this early start when we are well *en route*, with herds of game wherever we look. You may easily get your first wildebeest to-day."

"Hang the wildebeest!" says the sleepy one, evidently in a vile temper. "What the mischief am I eating here?"—holding something on a fork to the fire. "Hanged if it isn't a piece of zebra skin laid on my plate! Hymn-Book, what does this mean?"

"Mastah tell me boil piece zebra skin, see if get soft; show mastah."

"And I've been chewing at it for five minutes, thinking it was bacon! Go to Jericho with it!" And he hurls it savagely at Hymn-Book's head as that domestic kneels adjacent to our table, pulling my tent-pegs out of the ground, while the carriers, swarming round in all directions helping to pack tents and luggage, add to the general misery.

But there is a silver lining to every cloud, even before the sun is up; and behold us all, two hours later, a goodly caravan of people something like a mile in length (with stragglers) streaming over the ant-hill-studded flats, with more open country ahead of us which shows one great sea of waving golden grass. The sun is up, the moon and stars have faded, and the warmth of day is comforting us. Every one looks happy and feels it.

“ Are you not glad you got up, O’Flaherty ? ” says Cecil.
“ Look at that herd of buck ! ”

It grows very hot about 10, and at 11 A.M. we all stop to have a drink from our canvas water-bags, borne on a pole by a carrier, whom Hymn-Book is strictly enjoined to keep close to my machila, for fear he or the others will drink the precious water. There is just enough to last through the heat of the day, with care ; a little for every one, carriers included.

The guide marches well in front of the cavalcade, and has become a most extraordinary-looking object, being attired in various things picked up in the camp. To-day he leads us in an old macintosh of the Soldier Man’s (thrown away to lighten baggage and fought fiercely over till the guide got it) and a Bond Street hat of mine, mushroom shape and wreathed with daisies.

On we go, mile after mile, through the long hot morning, the tall grass hiding every one before and behind you from view. We make our own path ; no foot can have trod here before. The guide, when asked why he cannot take us along some sort of native track, says he is cutting across country as being shorter.

Once, in an open space—before again plunging into grass far higher than our heads—we meet a long caravan of some curious tribe doing their annual trek for water for their cattle to the Kafue River, but in another direction to ourselves. They drive about five hundred head of cattle, each animal whitewashed down one half of its body, each man and child also painted with whitewash right down one half of him (face and feet included), and each woman painted all over with large white spots the size of a currant-bun, I expect to show her inferiority.

“ What for white paint, Hymn-Book ? ” I inquire as this remarkable sight meets our eyes ; and Hymn-Book lucidly

explains, "Whitewash drive away devil and make cows go faster"—which statement wants more unravelling than any of us feel equal to this hot day.

At any rate, it is a comfort to know that the Devil can be got rid of with whitewash, and when you come to think of it it's not only the heathens who think so.

"When will this confounded grass end?" asks the O'Flaherty presently. "One couldn't see game here if millions were round us, as I dare say they are. I hear rushes and rustlings every minute, and haven't had a shot yet."

"Much more nasty sings coming than grass," says Hymn-Book cheerfully. "Soon guide say, we in one big bog."

The bog arrives—or, rather, we arrive at it. I have been walking with Cecil, but now Hymn-Book says the guide advises, "Missis get into her machila, 'cos she can't swim." Hardly have I hurriedly obeyed than—squelch, squash!—we are in the bog, the machila-men and every one else up to their knees.

One sees one's luggage (cherished things like my dressing-bag, with my jewel-case and pet photographs in it, and the Soldier Man's box of cartridges and his fifty-guinea high-velocity rifle), moving along, as it were, upon the face of the waters, the carriers, upon whose heads they are, being immersed almost up to the nose, through which they breathe only with difficulty, because of the thick, succulent reeds growing rankly in this dismal swamp.

Very soon my machila is deep down in the water, from which arises a ghastly smell, while all round me, as I lie in slime and water, wriggle water-snakes and other vile things. A huge rat dives across me; I am wet to my waist; and the morass appears to be growing deeper every minute.

"Stop!" roars Cecil, when we have done about half a mile of this. There is a dreadful quaking feeling underneath, as if any minute we might all have to swim, while far as eye

can reach the bog extends away to the skyline. "Hymn-Book, what the deuce does this mean?"

Not often does the quiet and dignified one get excited, but he's up to his middle in the bog, some one's tent ahead has just gone under altogether, and things are looking serious, for it's plain we are in one of the Kafue morasses, extending over miles of desolation away to the thirty-mile-distant Kafue River. The guide is yelled at to return, which, after many objections (bawled back from where he is taking off his macintosh and, with skinny black arms raised in the air, rolling it tight to place on his head to keep it dry), he finally obeys, up to his waist in the swamp.

"Ask this thrice-cursed guide," says the Soldier Man furiously, "what he has brought us into this for?"

"He say, mastah, this only way to get quick to Etebbe."

"How dare he bring us into a morass extending for miles? How much longer shall we be in this?"

Jabber, jabber, jabber; every one talks at once and gesticulates so violently that we all sink in a bit deeper than we were before.

All we can get from the guide is, "Bog plenty big. No can say when finish. If stop plenty talk, never get out before night come."

"Oh," I nearly sob, "this is too terrible! I am wet up to my neck. A slimy rat is flattened somewhere under me in the machila and can't get out. And the mosquitoes—look at them!"

They swarm in countless myriads over the surface of the bog, and are simply eating us up alive. The O'Flaherty's countenance, sticking out of the reeds, is covered with scarlet lumps, and he says he doesn't care if he is hanged for it, he'll strangle the guide then and there, and he lurches furiously for him. The guide, hateful brute, gets away by the skin of his teeth, and, after much talk as to whether we shall turn

back, go on or what, Cecil orders Hymn-Book to tell the guide that "so sure as there is a heaven above us, if we are not out of the bog in one hour, the guide will be *left* in the bog for good and all."

This fearful threat Hymn-Book translates, pointing first to the sky, then significantly into the bog, and the guide (his one eye at last alive with terror) plunges forward and the rest of us follow.

Three solid and terrible hours we spent travelling through that never-to-be-forgotten morass on the Kafue flats. About noon, no one could go another step without a rest of some kind, so, seeing a slight eminence in the distance which looked as if it might be an island, or something like *terra firma*, we sixty souls made for it, I, the one woman among the sixty, so low-spirited that I felt I did not much care if we ever reached it. Cecil tried all he knew to cheer me, again reminding me, as he did with the lions, "Think of your book!" To which I again replied tearfully, "If I'm drowned in a bog what does anything matter? My book may go to Jericho. Only let's get out of this."

We lunched, after a fashion, in the middle of the charming retreat we had got into. The green place *was* an island, and we climbed on to it—carriers, servants, and all—and had something to eat and some of our fast-vanishing water to drink. There was no room on the island for tents and luggage, so they were laid, as gingerly as might be, on to the hard, flattened-down cane-reeds, as thick as your finger, which covered the whole surface of the bog, making the going too awful for words, but which now came in useful to lay the luggage and tents and bundles of bedding on. We hoped they would not sink through, but lots of them did, and so deep was our depression that we sat inertly munching biscuits and watched with stoic calm one item after another either float away or go under with a squeleching noise. Nothing mattered.

“ There goes my hat-box ! ” I remarked.

“ Oh, I am sorry,” says Cecil. “ Which hat is it ? ”

“ The two-guinea one for farms,” is my somewhat enigmatical reply. But he understands, and says : “ The pretty white one with pink roses ? And you were going to wear it when we got to the Duke of Westminster’s place ! ”

“ What can that black object be over there, I wonder, O’Flaherty ? ” he adds, pointing away over the bog. “ Is it possible it is a hippo looking out of the swamp, or a buffalo’s head ? ”

“ It’s my black leather suit-case,” says the O’Flaherty drearily. “ I thought it was a hippo at first, and the grey thing following it a croc. But it isn’t. It’s the carrier trying to catch it up.”

It is 2 P.M. before at last, wet, miserable, and simply caked in foul and disgusting slime, we emerge from the Kafue morass on to delightful open, dry veldt. We are now on a big plain with a line of bush fringing it in the far distance round two sides. Here and there are to be seen herds of game, or groups of two, three and more, and the O’Flaherty’s delight when one group proves to be wildebeest (of which he has not yet got one specimen) is unbounded, and away he goes with the boy “ Milk ” to try to get one.

In the opposite direction goes Cecil, also after wildebeest, and I call a halt, order Jonas to light a fire of anything he can find and to boil the kettle for tea. Then I look at the sun, which is getting well down in the sky, and wonder where we are, and when we shall get anywhere if hunting is going to begin after all these delays ! Well, we are on a shooting trek, and I confess it would be desperately hard to pass those fine-horned wildebeest (which in bush country we shall not see at all) and not get some for trophies. We also need meat badly, so I try not to feel worried, and seat myself on the chop-boxes to await tea in the wilderness.

Shots ring out right and left, and from an ant-hill I watch the Soldier Man on one side bring his wildebeest to earth, dead after two shots, and the O'Flaherty, a mile away in the other direction, being hotly charged, head down, by his wounded quarry, he dodging round "Milk" and keeping it off by throwing his hat into its face.

The afternoon's sun is low, and a cool breeze heralds evening when at last the hunters return with two fine heads and stacks of meat, and we all have tea. The guide looks very worried. "Etebbe very, very long way still," he says.

And the caravan starts once more, we fondly believing that the bush we are now fast approaching is our destination. Alas, we little knew!

* * * * *

We were out all night till 7 A.M.

Never shall I forget what we all went through! Our water finished, our thirst awful, our bodies and feet so weary and worn that at last we could hardly move.

From tea-time, 4 P.M. till seven next morning we asked the guide or Hymn-Book feebly every half-hour, "Where is Etebbe?" But on and on and on we trekked, and no Etebbe,—not a light, not a kraal, not one sign of life or human presence—came into view in this limitless and ghastly wilderness.

The moon did not rise till midnight, and we had to stumble through a darkness so dense that you could not see your hand before your face.

And then, suddenly, a lion roared!

We were in thick forest now, and it sounded quite close. We had no light of any kind, and it might easily, I thought, spring upon our little party from the blackness all round.

I could bear no more. Lying in my machila, I felt I did not care what happened, nor if we reached anywhere. I was



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"HYMN-BOOK" CARPENTERING



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MACHILA AND CARRIERS ON MARCH TO ETEBBE

worn out, half dying of thirst and hunger (we had had no proper food all day), my clothes were cold and wet and slimy from the bog, my shoes full of it, and here were we in this desolate region, the home of wild beasts, and no inquiries could throw the slightest light upon when we might expect to reach our destination. That wretched guide might have been bound for eternity, he moved on ahead so implacably and relentlessly !

After the bush we again reached open country, and then, after hours of tramping, once more found ourselves in the thickest, highest, densest grass jungle we had ever yet seen. Into this we plunged. Whether the carriers were following or not no one could see, or at last cared. The moon was up now, and every now and then my machila would bump over a big lump in the little path—a carrier who had lain down with his load, too exhausted to go on. At every rustle in the dense, thick grass which rose on each side of us like a ten-foot wall, I trembled.

Once, I know, a lion was not far off, for I heard his grunt (more like a great pig than a lion)—a sure sign he was hungry. For three miles or so I was entirely alone, with two worn-out, rebellious machila-men, who I knew would throw me down and bolt if any lion or leopard came along. Cecil had had to go back to keep up the carrier who had his despatch-box, containing some sixty or seventy sovereigns in it. The O'Flaherty had gone ahead, and I had not seen him for an hour.

We got to Etebbe about 7 A.M., having done forty-five miles in one march. There was no strength in any one to unpack so much as a chair or a pillow ! We found a place where the ground was covered with soft fine grass and on to this we all sank, using our arms for pillows. The great grass jungle from which we had emerged, grew up to where we lay. It whispered close to us ; and then I remember no more

CHAPTER XXIV

(From my Diary)

THE Etebbe kraals, burnished brown, lie about half a mile away from us, and we have awoken refreshed and it is 12 noon and we are about to have breakfast. The O'Flaherty has just emerged very rapidly from the pool close to our camp, where he went to have a dip. A huge crocodile suddenly rose up as he lay splashing and enjoying himself, and made for him with a grab. He just got out "by the nail of his toe," so to speak, and lay on the grass so upset that I had to fan him back to his normal state, while the crocodile, retiring to the other end of the pool to meditate upon the disappointments of life, sat and watched us with one eye out of the water. We have decided to move at once a mile farther on, and send for water here, for "Crocs in shallow pools like this," says the O'Flaherty, reviving slowly, "take walks abroad, and my tent touches their pool."

Evening. We move on to-morrow to the Duke of Westminster's farm on the Kafue River—another long march. We have sat all day long in this new camp watching a mighty fire that I started by putting a match, just before we left, to the dense grass jungle at the edge of which we slept last night after that fearful trek. My idea was to burn that hateful jungle, and the crocodile and lions with it. I never dreamt it would blaze up so quickly as it did, but I nearly burnt our tents to cinders, the heat being so great that they could hardly be got down in time. The crocodile must by now be no more, for the flames leapt over his pool at once; but we all had to

run for our lives, and all day we have sat and watched my fire sweeping the whole countryside from horizon to horizon—a marvellous sight.

Dense volumes of smoke rose into the blue of the heavens, at times blotting out the sun, and the crackle of the flames was like artillery.

“Look ! look ! ” I cried as we sat at our tent-doors ; and the men rushed for their guns, for past our camp came flying buck, one after the other, driven out by the devastating fire. It seemed cruel to shoot at them, their terror was so great, but we wanted meat badly, for all the wildebeest had to be dropped and left behind last night. Only their horns were saved.

In half an hour there lay in camp, food, and plenty, for the whole sixty souls. One could not shoot all the game that rushed past our tents, and many lovely buck, I am glad to say, passed unharmed. Flights of pheasants, partridges, and sand-grouse also winged their terrified way over our tent-roofs, and a few were shot for the pot.

I was dozing in my tent, very tired from yesterday, when I heard “Bang ! bang ! ” from the O'Flaherty's rifle, and then, “Great Scott ! I've killed six niggers instead of impala, I *do* believe ! ”

Frantic howls rose from the village, and we all rushed to the scene. The O'Flaherty's bullets had killed a buck among a party of natives, who were racing through long grass to kill it with their assegais, and he had not seen the men in the grass, only some horns. No one, however, was hurt, and the howling ceased when the O'Flaherty offered copious presents as compensation for the fright. I heard Big Ben saying to the bodies, “Missis shoot me dead, but I came to life when missis give me blanket, look-glass, buck, and pot jam.”

So the six “corpses ” lay in a row and showed no signs of life till the O'Flaherty, with dismal visions of being tried for

manslaughter, laid tempting offerings round them in a ring. Then one eye opened, and then another, and when a general resurrection had taken place, the O'Flaherty, breathing freely once more, joined us at afternoon tea.

"I forgot one chap's blanket," he said, "so he promptly lay down and died again till I fetched it."

Duke of Westminster's Farm, Kafue River, July 30. We left Etebbe long before daylight, and had a lovely trek through bush country to Lebombo, and then on to here. Soon after starting Cecil shot a beautiful impala buck, and I photographed it, propped up with sticks.

Farther on in the forest we saw eland through the trees, and the Indefatigable One and Hymn-Book stalked them; but they got away and Cecil was much upset, for he has not got a single eland yet. At 2 P.M. we reached Lord Wolverton's farm, and were most kindly entertained to lunch by the first white man we have seen for a long while now—Mr. Graham, the manager. He had killed two large crocodiles in a shallow pool close to his hut only an hour before.

I was very nervous, having found large lion-spoor outside my hut at Lebombo, where we slept one night, and where I occupied a new clean grass hut prepared for our friend, Mr. Hugh, Native Commissioner, who was so kind to us at Magoy, and who is now on his annual travels somewhere in our rear collecting "hut-tax." I heard twigs cracking all night, and now it seems the lions have preceded us here, for their spoor is all over the place and there is talk of a lion-hunt. The two lions must have walked past the door of my hut, for their footmarks were visible in the soft sand.

CHAPTER XXV

It was a very long but interesting march from the Duke of Westminster's farm to the Kafue River.

We stopped at the Duke's farm one day and night, and were very hospitably entertained by Mr. W., the manager, and several fine specimens of Young England (his assistants) learning under him to grow cotton and mealies and cattle and other things. Farming up in these parts appears to be a very paying matter. "What to do with our boys" might be written up all over the country, for provided a parent can start his son with a capital of about £500, and has first let him have even a few months with a man so experienced and able as Mr. W.—and there are several willing to take pupils—and provided the boy is not too young, nor yet too old, and therefore able to resist fever, a better opening for a fortune some day could not be found.

This isn't an advertisement for Mr. W., for I don't even know if he takes pupils in the ordinary way. But if he doesn't, others do, and cotton-growing always pays and always must, or so we were told. The people who want cotton in this world can't get enough and will never be able to get enough, I don't know why. But that being so—and we were told it everywhere, so I suppose it's true—it's obvious that the thing to do is to grow cotton for all you are worth.

It grows up in the Kafue district, by itself, as it were. You sow it and leave it alone and up it comes. I suppose you must weed it sometimes, but labour is cheap.

Our tents we pitched almost touching Mr. W.'s cotton fields. The cotton bushes looked neat and pretty, planted in straight rows, and the only drawback was the flies. They swarmed. Cotton attracts them. And they drive you out of your tent, for you get tired of fighting and whisking them off your head and face.

The O.C. and the O'Flaherty decided they'd sleep in the open, so though their tents were pitched they had them pulled down again and bivouacked outside.

We sat and had some tea after our long day's march, and looked over a sea of white fluff (the cotton pods all bursting) down to the Kafue River winding like a broad blue ribbon below.

Behind us were the huts of the farm, and the native women all the evening were bringing in their loads of cotton on their heads, shovelling them into a special hut where the cotton is all stored, and where the wretched assistant who had to receive and weigh it had contracted a kind of chronic hay (or cotton) fever through the fluff going up his nose.

As each fresh bale was shot in he gave a loud sneeze, and the assistant who was writing it all down said, "God bless you," and this went on like clockwork, and seemed to be part of the show.

At seven o'clock Mr. W. sent to ask us to please come and have our evening meal with them in the Big Hut, a large bungalow made mosquito- and fly-proof with fine wire netting; a picturesque barn of a place with pretty thatched eaves, white mud walls, and inside just as primitive, for the floors were of mud, our long table was planks on trestles, and our chairs benches.

The farm looked homely and pretty as the sun set, and the cattle were seen coming home and lowing, just as in Gray's "Elegy" ("The lowing herd come winding o'er the lea"), and the God of Day behaved here with the same tact and

consideration which has distinguished him since his birth, for when the proper time arrived he retired behind the distant hills in an orderly and unobtrusive manner, "leaving the world to darkness and to me"; and when you're not far off the equator one feels inclined to say, after a grilling day, "And about time too."

As we turned in to supper we could see Jane in high feather, having the time of her life chasing Mr. W.'s poultry round and round the huts. She hasn't seen anything so domestic as a poultry yard since we left England, and her attentions seemed to be almost embarrassing, the cackling was so awful.

The most distinctive feature of this farm is its wonderful cocoanut palms which grow singly to a great height, but also the trunks of the palms are a most extraordinary shape, being exactly like a monster champagne bottle 100 feet high. These are dotted about all over the landscape, for the farm covers an area of many miles, and when you are up on the hills it can be seen from a great distance.

We supped merrily, and one got a splendid idea of the whole life and its conditions from the talk round the table. In honour of the first white woman they had seen for some years at the farm, all the men had on white shirts and collars and looked ghastly uncomfortable but smiling. Beyond the Zambesi, men live in shirtsleeves and shorts, and though they doubtless wash, there can necessarily be no clear signs of it, because the ground half the year is composed of black ash from the grass fires which sweep the country from end to end. Through this the men tramp or crawl (stalking game), and up flies the soot deluging yourself and every one near. A charming sight we all looked after a long day's march through black ash! A long cavalcade, every one black as a tinker and not a white skin left to see!

However, we all sat down to table clean and white with soap

and water to-night, and never rose till nine. What tales of life beyond the Zambesi! What a country is this! It is life indeed! One felt one never wished to leave it!

I was rather worried with Mr. W.'s nineteen affectionate cats who sat round my chair miaowing for food and interrupting thrilling tales of man-eating lions and other adventures. Only nineteen cats could keep the farm clear of rats, and I was apologized to for their presence on the plea that if the cats weren't there the rats would be, even to jumping into our plates.

At ten we all said good-night and left for our own camp. It was decided that Mr. W. would take Cecil and me in his trap next morning early to where the Cape to Cairo Railway cuts its lonely path through the jungle, and then our carriers would meet us there, and a nine-mile march would bring us to the Kafue River and station. The O'Flaherty elected to remain at the farm till next day, as he wanted to shoot hippos in the river and "have another buck" with our hosts, "buck" in this case meaning a chat, not a deer.

At five we were up, and the O.C. got off the carriers, in charge of Hymn-Book. I was all but driven mad with the flies in my tent. *Never* camp near cotton.

By seven we had climbed into Mr. W.'s trap—I sitting with Mr. W. in front and Cecil behind—and we started off for the dustiest drive I have ever made. We were going hard for two hours before we were off the Duke of Westminster's property. Of course it was quite wild jungle and hills and valleys like all the rest. They have only, so far, farmed a limited area. We saw buck several times, and once all stopped to have a look at very clear lion spoor, evidently only about two hours old. The natives can tell almost to an hour.

The scenery was beautiful. The African spring was in the air, and the forests bursting into leaf. Huge trees like

great nosegays of flowers, with no leaves as yet, were a great feature. Here a pink one, here a blue, then white, yellow, flame-coloured, the latter with tenderest young green sprouting in between the trumpet-shaped flowers of scarlet. I wanted to pick everything, but we had to press on, or Mr. W. said we should not reach Kafue before dark.

By the time we reached the railway no one would have recognized us, for we were so coated in vermilion-coloured dust that it was as a mask to our faces.

At the spot to which our servants and carriers had been sent two hours ahead of us, were some old railway trucks, and in one of these, a luggage van, our servants had laid lunch out for us, and a very nice lunch too. Mr. W. was surprised, and said when the Duke was trekking up there he hardly lived better, and we must find it very expensive? As a sixpenny pot of jam or potted meat is worth about four shillings by the time you've railed and carrier-ed it, round the further Rhodesias, and as we open two or three of these potted luxuries a day, to say nothing of other delicacies from the London firm who did our chop-boxes for us, I replied that the only thing that worried me over our life now *was* the awful expense.

But we enjoyed our meal, and Jonas made us tea, and when we had finished and had a rest, Mr. W. bade us farewell, and pointed up the long iron road disappearing into jungle ahead.

"Nine or ten miles of it and you'll hear the gush of the river. Other side of the river (there's a bridge) you'll find Kafue."

"It will seem like London," I cried. "Is there a town? A village?"

"Towns, villages? Up here? Oh no; a kraal in the forest, the stationmaster's hut, and a general store hard by where the prices will stun you. That's all. Remember me

to the stationmaster. He's a decent sort. He may be out after buck, but if he's there he'll give you any help you want. He's also postmaster."

"And when he's out after buck, what becomes of the letters—and trains?" I inquired, feeling worried over important expected letters, and we had, remember, seen no posts or a railway for weeks now.

"They look after themselves. The post-office is always open. If he's out, go and help yourselves."

"We will; if there's anything of our English mails left," said I ruefully. "Some one else may have helped themselves."

"Ah! It's a Land of Chances! Good-bye! Keep straight on! No water till you get there."

We got into file on the railway line and started. Soon it was loneliest solitary jungle again. A train only came through twice a week. The next morning was train day and would deposit in our midst all the way from England our "Insular Miss." What, we wondered, Cecil and I, as we trudged along the line, would she think of this queer country?

We journeyed all day. Never did nine miles seem so interminable. The Soldier Man thrashed a carrier for impertinence and that made a diversion. These Mashakalumbwe are most awful brutes sometimes.

So for fear he next dropped me he had to be taken off the machila, and put to carry a load, and gave us a lot of trouble all the rest of the day, and had to be beaten several times again.

Towards evening, far off misty blue mountains began to appear, and the cool breeze from them gladdened our hearts. The men said Kafue lay at the foot of the blue mountains, so we pressed on and the day passed.

About four o'clock we heard—and we all stopped short—the rushing of water.

Just ahead of us lay the Kafue River.

I can never forget our joy as we all crowded to its high banks to look down at it. It was as broad as are broad parts of the Thames, but its colour was blue as sapphire, its banks fringed with flowering trees in places and in others with tall pampas grass, and it wound away, deep and full, and cool, and was a glorious sight to us straight from the waterless desert. The carriers rushed down and drank, but even as they did so, one realized what care was needed, for up rose a small crocodile quite near them, and with yells they all rushed back.

We crossed the river by the bridge over which the train goes, and then after a few hundred yards of more jungle we beheld three huts, and on one was the familiar "E.R." and sign of a British post-office. A little way off was a store. A ragged tent or two. Another hut on a kopje. Some trucks and bales of cotton. A cotton plantation farther on. That was Kafue. To us it felt like the return to civilization! We rushed up to a gentleman clad in shirt-sleeves soaked in blood, seated helping to skin a buck, and asked for our letters, and he rose to greet us.

Was he station and postmaster? A rifle near, and the quarry, *and* his condition, seemed to say he must be. "Yes, I am he. What name? Oh, are you 'the Captain'? We've wondered when you'd turn up! A lot of letters for you and the lady. Go in and help yourselves, if you don't mind. Where do you think of camping? I'll show you a nice spot close by here."

While the camp went up (it *was* a pretty spot, just off the line, in a clearing in the jungle) my companion and I sat and drank tea and read our letters, the accumulation of weeks. I realized as we both sat there (under one of the scarlet trumpet-flower trees I have mentioned, only this one was also in full leaf and would give welcome shade when it was

hot), that thousands of miles now separated us from the writers of those various letters. It came over me almost with a shock as I looked at the English post-marks. Far into the darkness we two sat there, before we turned in to our tents for sleep, and we talked in low voices of England, and all we had done and seen since we left it. Somehow we felt much farther from England that night, than we had when camping in more desolate spots than this, out on the open wilderness.

The tiny red beam from the hut of the buck-hunting station-master, the dim railway lines, like long threads of silver-grey in the light of a young pale moon, the whispering of the trees around, the dull thrum about a mile away of tom-toms in the native kraal; a dim vision of a white man, followed by two natives, trudging past our camp-fires on his way to the ganger's hut on the kopje, and his kindly, "Good-night, keep your fire going. Plenty of lions round here," all this demi-civilization made the great distances we, and these letters, had come, seem bigger than ever before.

When the ganger paused also to say, "Yes, the train arrives here seven to-morrow morning," and we opened a letter from Miss Britannia Orion to say she "did hope we would be at Kafue to meet her, it would be so awful to have come all that way and find we had gone into the wilderness and never returned," we decided (lovely and quiet as the night was, and our cheery log fire piled high, very tempting to sit over and discuss home news) that we'd better go to bed, or we should not be up and dressed in time to fulfil the expectations of the Insular Miss.

So we said good-night, and soon the whole camp was deep in slumber.

CHAPTER XXVI

I WAS sound asleep and dreaming when I heard Cecil shouting, "Go and tell missis train from England here in half an hour."

I started up in my bed, and hurriedly dressed, and the whole camp was up and alive and running about. The excitement at the idea of seeing a train straight from the great far-away England (as, of course, they all believed it to be) was tremendous.

The native is a joyous creature when some fun and not too much work is on, and so rings of them this early, dewy morning leapt and danced upon the sward, whirled and laughed and snapped their fingers, and then leapt into the air again, and the coming railway train was responsible for it all. All of them intended to see it.

The day was beautiful, the early air sweet and delicious. I dressed myself in as sporting-trekking looking a kit as possible (so as to impress the Insular Miss with all we'd done), and then ran out and found the Soldier Man dressed, and having a hurried tea and bread and butter standing under the big tree. He, too, looked most Rhodesian! A khaki flannel shirt, collarless and open at the neck. Khaki "shorts." Bare legs. That was all.

A long and far-off whistle from the depths of the forests caused us both to start. How long a time since any such sound had greeted our ears! It was quite nice and civilized! and we gulped down our tea, called to Hymn-Book and

carriers to accompany us, and to the other boys to make the camp look nice and tidy and keep a kettle boiling for the inner refreshment of the Miss, and started to run up the line, for here was the train, close on us, thundering over Kafue Bridge.

As it passed us, out of one window hung the O'Flaherty, making violent gesticulations to us, but what about, we could not guess. We had quite forgotten him, and it was evident he had picked up the train *en route*.

No sign of the Insular Miss, and we arrived breathless on the platform, and the O'Flaherty bounded out in a fearful fluster, glancing over his shoulder.

"Mum's the word!" said he. "I've put my foot into it nicely. Tell you about it later on. *She's* in there!" (pointing to a compartment lower down).

"Who?" said I, gazing at the O'Flaherty, who was, if you please, in his pyjamas, and his hair on end like shock-headed Peter.

"The Miss!" he whispered. "Don't let her see me. She don't know who I am. Let me, for the Lord's sake, get into camp. May I use your tent?" (to Cecil) "and clean meself and dress? Oh, lor'! *I've* been and gone and done it! No, don't stop me! I'm off!"

And he dived back into his carriage and dropped noiselessly out the other side into the jungle, from whence he vanished campwards, his carriers in his wake.

And now "the Miss" was on the platform gazing around her and looking mildly bewildered. We had last met in London! And this was a contrast!

We greeted her enthusiastically, and when her luggage had been collected (the train full of passengers leaning out to bid her farewell and take stock of us) we led the way down the railway line to the camp, talking as we went, and wondering very much what had happened to so disturb the O'Flaherty, but taking care not to allude to him in any way.

“ I’m sure,” said I to the Miss, “ that you must be longing for a hot bath and a rest and some tea ? They all await you in my tent—here ” (and I led her to its entrance) “ and meantime the servants shall get up your tent. What sort is it ? ”

“ It’s a Whymper. I bought it at Capetown. I hope it will be all right. Yes, it has been a long journey. Five solid days in that train ! ”

Some rather disturbing recollection seemed to here pucker her brow, for she frowned, and then I left her, and joining Cecil we went for a stroll to talk things over and then repaired to his tent, where, all this time, the O’Flaherty had remained, well out of sight, and we found him shaving and making awful faces.

“ What does it all mean, O’Flaherty ? ” demanded Cecil, in a stage whisper.

And our friend thereupon explained.

He had left the Duke’s farm overnight and slept with his carriers round him at the edge of the forest at a spot where the train would pass about 5 A.M. and where the engine took up water. He forgot the Insular Miss would be in that same train, and she (also half-dressed), gazing from the window, and thinking, I am sure, “ what a queer country,” suddenly beheld a dishevelled Being in ragged pyjamas (nearly all holes) hanging on to a sponge-bag and pillow holloaing to the train to stop, for it had just started again, thus awakening him from his slumbers, while his carriers (who had also been asleep) ran behind, hurling his possessions into the train anyhow.

Into the Insular Miss’ carriage, strewn with her clothes and possessions, bounced the O’Flaherty. They had never met, and neither knew who the other was.

She was in curl-papers, which she hurriedly began to undo. He, unabashed, plumped in his dirty ragged pyjamas down opposite her and drew a sigh of relief.

"She looked me up and down," said he, continuing the narrative, "as much as to say, 'Who the devil is this person?' but I never budged. The train was mine as much as hers, and no room anywhere else. True, I was black from head to foot as you saw me. But, bless you, every one's black up here with this black ash all over the ground and I was on my hands and knees after a buck before I fell asleep last evening, and, of course, it never even struck me *who* she was, till she asked me, very frigidly, with the ice on, 'whether I knew anything of a shooting party up here which she was on her way to join?' 'A wild lot,' said she, 'but quite nice people, picked up through a newspaper.' Me blood, it curdled," added the O'Flaherty, and he was just about to go on and tell us some more, when Jonas announced, "Breakfast ready."

Seeing the Miss waiting, all washed and clean, under the tree, we went out and joined her, and down we sat and started politely inquiring how she had enjoyed her voyage out, and journey up, and so on, and, of course, the O'Flaherty, laced tightly up into Cecil's tent close by, could hear every word.

"Oh, very much, thank you," said the Miss, helping herself to a hot scone, "it appears to be a most interesting country! The only thing I don't quite like about it is, the familiarity of the lower classes. A most filthy and very low individual—evidently the stoker, or something, of the train—actually on our way here, emerged from the forest, like a kind of orang-outang, and stopped the train; and, although clad only in his pyjamas, literally *riddled* with holes, he got into my carriage and talked to me in a most hail-fellow-well-met style. He read my newspapers without your leave or by your leave, scratched his back and said the mosquitoes were 'the very devil out here,' or some such remark. He stretched out his legs, coal black from the engine, on to my seat opposite, and he concluded," the Insular Miss



JONAS AND A SLAVE



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MASHAKALUMBWE HUNTERS AND THEIR DOGS

paused to give weight to the finale, "by offering me a cigarette to smoke!"

By this time a most perturbed-looking eye was seen glued to the little string window of the tent containing the O'Flaherty, and I heard sounds of rather hard breathing.

"I declined with thanks, naturally," continued the Insular Miss, "and decided I would, on arrival, complain to the stationmaster here, and shall certainly do so. One knows that in our colonies class distinctions are not as clean-drawn as at home. I have heard of people sitting down to meals with gangers and engine-drivers out here, and arriving again in England a year later not greatly the worse for it. I am quite prepared to do my best on our coming travels to adapt myself to any strange sorts of people we may meet, so long as they are not *too* 'rag-tag and bob-tail,' if you will excuse the expression? But there *is* a limit, and my people at Muddlethorpe-on-Sea would agree with me that the line must be drawn at unwashed stokers—in their pyjamas." The last enormity was added in a hushed whisper.

"I know the man you mean," said I, "he *is* a most familiar person. An Irishman, wasn't he? Big Ben, hand the lady the butter."

"I think he was Irish," replied the Miss. "I have never been to Ireland, but he had all the appearance of those moon-lighting ruffians you see in *Punch*, don't you know? hiding behind hedges and hanging on to the hind-legs of pigs, and singing . . ."

Here the Insular Miss broke off, *very* startled, for a voice from inside the tent bawled out, as if in continuation of her sentence:

*"Oh I happened to be borrrn
At the toime they cut the corrn
Quite contagious to the town of Killaloo."*

And, as we all looked up, forth came the O'Flaherty, (throwing all prudence to the winds), and being I suppose desirous, after a fifteen-hour fast, of securing to himself some share of the now rapidly vanishing breakfast.

"Top o' the mornin' to you all!" he shouted, ignoring the alarmed looks of our new arrival; "the stoker—at your service, marm," bowing awkwardly, as a stoker would, to the Miss, upon whose countenance a frozen expression now settled itself, "May I partake of my vittles alongside of you? The engine's havin' its breakfast, so I've come for mine. In this 'ere land, Miss, we're all alike—same clay, don't you know? Up beyond this 'ere Zambesi, rag-tag wants food same as the upper ten. Now I've cleaned meself, ladies and gents" (beaming at us all and preparing to sit down to a square meal at the Insular Miss' very elbow, rigid now as a half-bent poker), "I'll ax yer, Miss—Miss—Britannia Orion, now the dirt's gone, am I an intirely bad-lookin' bhoy?"

"*Who* is this? *May* I inquire?" demands the Insular Miss, half rising from her chair in her horror.

"Let me introduce you to each other," said I. "I forgot you had not met. Miss Britannia Orion—Mr. James, Algernon, O'Brien-O'Flaherty, of O'Flaherty Hall, County Cork."

"O'Brien-O'Flaherty! Not *the* Mr. O'Flaherty? the fourth member of our trek party?" faintly asks Miss Britannia. And "the" O'Flaherty replies, humbly:

"The same."

"Dear me!" says the Insular Miss; and, having shaken hands limply with her enemy (who is now looking extraordinarily clean and nice), she buries her face into her cup of tea

CHAPTER XXVII

THE "Insular Miss" settled down very quickly to us and the new life.

She was a buxom, fresh-looking, energetic woman somewhere between thirty and forty, with pretty, bright, smiling blue eyes and a pink colour, and her fair hair was brushed back and rolled up more for comfort than looks.

In fact, she proved exactly what she looked in London—a downright, athletic, healthy Englishwoman, reared at a seaside village at home, very conventional, and sure and certain that nothing out of England could be much use except as a curiosity. She had come to see the Further Rhodesias as a curiosity and we (who thought of living in it) as part of the curiosity. She was mad-keen to do everything and see everything, so that when she got home to Muddletorpe-on-Sea and dispensed tea and wafer bread and butter to rows of old and young ladies and one curate, she would be able to "tell them all about it."

With this in view (and the idea, I think, sustained her, as it did me, in much that we eventually went through) she had come armed with a massive tome which it took one carrier to carry, labelled "My Jottings." Also a camera and field-glasses through which no one could ever see anything, though we all pretended to, and would exclaim loudly, as we glued one eye to it, "I say! I see a lion eating a buck—quite twenty miles away!" She also had much *en evidence* a large white sun-umbrella and sun-topee. The latter, like

mine, the servants carried throughout the trek. My felt and her panama were all we needed.

The Insular Miss was nothing if not thorough. She arrived in an ordinary long dress. She emerged from her tent transformed. Her alpaca skirt was as short as mine and showed a well-turned leg and ankle. A loose blouse comfortably open at the throat, with pads on the shoulders for her gun, and a strap with places for cartridges slung across her chest, struck a kind of envy to my heart, for I'd never thought of pads and cartridge-straps or anything like that to my outfit, or *I'd* have had them too. She also had a huge, murderous-looking knife thrust into a leather sheath on her left hip, wherewith to skin the fallen buck or slay the lion should he presume to dare go for her.

The Insular Miss very soon made me feel a miserable worm.

She offered to accompany the Soldier Man on his early-morning shoot the second day.

Cecil whispered to me not to be jealous. "I bet she gives it up after three or four miles. No woman could plough through some of the places we go through. I must humour her, but she'll be back in camp in an hour or two in charge of Hymn-Book."

So they departed, and I felt very forlorn and wished I was stronger and looked it, like our Insular Miss. But I hoped soon to see a draggled figure returning with Hymn-Book, and in this pleasant anticipation the morning slowly passed. I inspected the camp kitchen and saucepans, sent tons of washing down to the river by the table-boys, saw to the tidiness of the tents and camp generally, and then went up the line to have a chat with the stationmaster, and on to the general store for the sheer pleasure of laying coins on a counter and getting something back for them, it was so lovely to do "shopping" once more. Then I returned to

camp and wondered when the Insular Miss would be appearing, dead beat.

But no such thing happened, and about midday she and Cecil appeared together, and he told me in his tent that he'd met "strong, hearty women, but upon my word, the Miss beats them all hollow. We came to impenetrable thickets; through them she plunged, I following. We came to a bog full of water-snakes and crocs; into it she went without a moment's hesitation. She has shot a buck and two wild geese, and she has tramped fifteen miles and wanted more; but I wanted breakfast."

I was grievously disappointed! I thought I had borne the hardships and discomforts of our trek so well, and had also hoped the Insular Miss would grumble a lot, and that Cecil would say, "Look how cheerfully *Ethe* bore it all." And now, here she was, prepared for anything, and with the constitution of a horse!

After they'd had breakfast (the O'Flaherty and I had had ours long before) the Miss, objecting to the place her tent was on, strode up to it and, much quicker than any of the servants could have done it, levelled it flat to earth, chose a new place, cleared it with a spade, and erected her "Whymper" upon it—and all without turning a hair, after a fifteen-mile walk.

She then offered to help skin the buck she had shot and assist to cut it up, and as we wouldn't let her do that, she sat near and superintended the operation, showing no dislike of blood, eyes, tongues, and hearts lying all round her, and I wasn't surprised to hear, in passing, that she didn't believe in the anti-vivisectionists.

"At any rate," I mused, picking flowers off the bushes near, "now is the time to find out what her views are on the Suffrage question. I don't much mind which she is, anti or not. If anything, it will be more fun if she's an anti."

So I picked my flowers, a big armful of purpley-grey balls of blossom, of the nature of guelder roses and heavy with honey. And fetching a camp-table and a bowl I called for water, and stood arranging my flowers, while the Miss arranged, in a tempting row on the grass, the buck's head, tongue, heart, and liver—rather a contrast to my flowers.

"Ahem!" said I, "the English papers by your train are like a breath from civilization. Plenty going on in England!"

"Oh yes," said the Miss, leaning forward to dig her skinning-knife into a kidney and holding it up to Jonas to inquire did he know how to cook devilled kidneys for breakfast, "oh yes. It is quite strange to think of how far England is away."

"I see that the air is, as usual, full of strikes and discontent. Really it is getting dreadful. When I was a child one never heard of such goings-on. And I wonder why?"

"Oh," said the Miss, "I've no patience with it all! And the women are as bad as the men!"

I couldn't have landed my fish better myself. We were fairly started.

"Yes, I see that the Suffragettes are at it again—daring to ask for their political freedom."

"Political nonsense!" said the Miss. "We have got on very well since creation as we are. It is too absurd this new idea that we are an oppressed lot."

"But I wonder," said I, "whether those who *are* oppressed, think it too absurd?"

"You are never . . . a Suffragette?" demanded the Miss, looking suddenly up at me.

"Oh yes. Didn't you know? Are you an Anti?"

"I don't go round holding meetings and saying we 'don't want the vote,' and asking errand-boys and shop-girls to sign petitions, and distributing vulgar post-cards about the

place. I'm simply not interested, and don't much care whether you get it or not."

"When we get it, shall you use your vote?"

"You won't get it."

"As certain as that the sun will rise to-morrow shall we get it," said I, "and until we do, England will go down—and down."

"How do you make that out?" inquired the Miss, and the O'Flaherty, hearing the discussion, came out of his tent with his chair and, plumping it down, lit his pipe to listen. The O'Flaherty has a receptive mind. It's chock-a-block with the funny, one-sided ideas of Englishmen, but dimly *realizing* this chock-a-block state of his outlook he is more or less prepared for reforms.

The stationmaster and ganger, guns on their shoulders, here also came up, and actually forgot the chase and all else, standing listening to certainly the first Suffrage speaker these wilds had ever heard.

"England will go down," I said, "unless the woman-voice in the country be heard, because nothing else could happen where only half the race govern and make laws. Has it not been the fate of all nations hitherto? Don't our laws show that something is wrong? Look at our stupid and cruel marriage and divorce laws. They were made by men, and no woman was asked did she approve of them? did she agree to them? or would she obey them? Woman, half-asleep, apparently, submitted to these things once, but now she is awakening—at last."

"What's wrong," said the O'Flaherty, cheerily, prodding his tobacco with his finger, "with our marriage laws? And if they are wrong, how could we help it?"

"I'm not unjust enough," I replied, "to blame men singly, or even collectively, for the cruelties inflicted on women by, for instance, the marriage and divorce laws. But one asks

oneself, ' *Who* made these laws ? What manner of men met in our English Parliament and drew out these wicked statutes of which the salient features are one code of morals for men and another (and, consequently, an impossible one) for women ? ' We know that those same men (whose own ideas, embodied thus, proclaim them to have been unfit for their high posts of responsibility) were placed in those posts by the voice and choice of the men of our country, not that of women. What were the men of our country about, to place them there ? What are they about now ? I might ask. It's a monstrous thing that for centuries this condition of injustice has gone on, till at last the inevitable result is here—the rebellion of woman."

" Well," said the stationmaster, " I agree with you. It's a beastly shame."

" I have met plenty of good men in my life," I continued, " who, I know, would have been no party, had they been asked, to such an iniquity as our English marriage laws. Think of it ! A so-called ' contract ' is entered into, and the man may break it, but the woman is still bound, and will be punished if she, in despair, breaks it too ! In all other known ' contracts,' if one party fails to keep his share of it, the other party is free of all obligation. But in this, of marriage, the most important and serious of all (and has the Church ever interfered in this wickedness ?), those men who devised it appear to have acted with great selfishness. To have assumed responsibility, yet to have laid most of the burden and responsibility on women ! The generations to follow have had to bear the results (chiefly the women and children) —results so far-reaching that there is very little of the present unrest and misery in England which cannot be traced to that source, and to other statutes noticeable for the same one-sided view and aims."

" Lor' bless you ! " said another man, coming up (he

farmed near Kafue, and was on his way home when he saw us assembled), "I'm with you, Mrs. Suffragette, for I know how *I've* suffered through our infernal laws ! They sometimes hit men too, you know !"

"Like the boomerang," said I, "they return to knock down the thrower sometimes."

"Well, yes. You see, it's like this. My missus and I didn't get on. And it all happened in England, where a woman can't get a divorce unless her husband beats her or hurts her. I'd never done that, and couldn't consent to have it said I did. I won't say I was a good husband. I fear I wasn't too faithful, don't you know ! But I was *never* cruel."

"Oh, but," said I, "don't you call *that* cruel ?"

"What, missis ?"

"To be unfaithful to a young wife that loved you, and had trusted you with her life and happiness ?"

"Well, hardly *cruel*, don't you know."

"Now, sir, do you see why women should help make the laws ? Here are you, a man, incapable of knowing what a woman feels about such things, and calmly deciding that it's 'not cruelty' to break your wife's heart, shatter her ideals and her happiness, and cause her to feel that never again can things be the same between you. If you *don't* know that that is *awful* cruelty (as women feel things) it proves how important the woman's voice in the law is, and how incapable men are of judging. And if you *do* know it's cruelty (and it looks as if you do, considering that if your wives are untrue *you* feel it to be so, and frame your law to get rid of them !), then it proves that men can't be trusted to make the laws alone ; their outlook is too selfish."

The gentleman stood and scratched his head, and it apparently dawned on him for the first time that there was food for reflection in women's demand for political recognition.

He then informed us that he had divorced his wife years

after his own infidelities to her, perpetrated during the years that she was quite devoted and faithful to him !

"I s'pose she got a bit sick of my goin's on," said he, "and after a while she took to flirtin' herself—'ter cheer herself up,' she said. That made me mad, for she wouldn't have nothin' more ter say to me. And in the end we did separate and was parted and never met. She asked me to make it up as she had to take my money, an' I wouldn't, but yet grumbled at havin' to support her. And then she wrote and said I'd best divorcee her, as she had met a man wot she loved and loved her, and would be good to her."

"And you agreed ? How *could* you ?" I asked, "when you caused the whole trouble ?"

"What could I do, missis ?"

"Oh, what could you do ? Why, let her divorcee you—*at all costs*. The original blame was yours."

"It's an everyday affair. I'll confess the law's hard on women. Yes, I see it clearer. They've got to foller in our footsteps and take the whole blame. Pore Mary !"

And he went off through the forest and we saw him no more. We all talked a little longer, and then the Miss and I went up the line to the little store to get things we wanted and to generally improve each other's acquaintance.

The store was a marvellous place. It smelt of everything strong under the sun. The mud walls were hung with skins for sale, and its owner appeared to have the same touching trust in mankind that the postmaster had, for he left it hours on end open and you walked in and helped yourself, and if you wanted to be honest you scribbled on a bit of paper what you'd had and signed your name.

But to-day he was there and attended to us ; but the Miss, when we left, told me she didn't think much of a shop where, when you asked for hair-nets, the shopman said he'd run out of hair-nets, but a large consignment of frying-pans had

just come up from Livingstone, and would you have one instead? She went into her tent on our return to camp, and I heard a heavy sigh for the vanished glories of shopping in Regent Street, where hair-nets never ran out nor could be confused with frying-pans, anyhow.

I liked the charming Miss, though I confess she now and then riled me, as I dare say I did her. She was fond of managing every one's affairs, and, when she tried to create reforms in camp and show us how things should be done in a life and country she knew nothing of, we kicked and there were gentle skirmishes.

Seeing my bed out in the open, where I always sleep, she informed me she considered it not only almost improper but dangerous; and when I replied that it was fun to be improper in a country like Rhodesia, and the miserable part of England was, that impropriety there was like painting your face (no harm in it unless you did it so badly that every one knew), she almost fell back into a bush of thorns and said I was joking, and wouldn't believe it when I said, laughing, I wasn't.

We were all at tea that first day and were having it under the trumpet-tree, the stationmaster and an assistant, Mr. "Bobs," with us. The Insular Miss was not at all sure whether to sit down to table with a stationmaster was not irretrievably losing caste, but seeing us able to joke and laugh and talk she gave a long sigh and joined us.

We were discussing Rhodesia, and the Miss was getting a *lot* of shocks, when we heard frightful cries coming up from the river. I seemed to know in a minute what it was. Some one was being mauled by a lion. So it actually turned out. We all started to our feet and ran on to the railway-line, whence we could see clear down to the river. The shrieks continued, and two natives came running along the line, tearing their hair and howling. Our servants and carriers met them, and were informed that a native herd-boy, tending

cattle on the river-bank about a mile away, had suddenly been startled, as he sat dozing in the sun, by a large male lion springing from behind a bush at one of the cows. The herd-boy, aged about sixteen, most pluckily seized his assegai and went for the lion single-handed. It left the cow and sprang at the boy, and when it had mauled his face and body in a terrible manner, his screams attracting these other men who came running, it sprang off him and was seen no more. The herd-boy lay where he had fallen, and they had come for help.

We sent my machila and machila-men to have him carried up, and Cecil got me into my tent and begged me not to come out till they had passed and had got the boy into a hut in the kraal, a mile away.

I went and sat in my tent, and heard the procession passing along the railway-line. The boy was still alive.

The O'Flaherty, popularly regarded as the "Medicine Man," got out his medicine-chest, and I could see him kneeling on the grass, selecting lint, bandages, and medicine. Sorry as I knew he was, I knew also that here was a chance of showing his prowess as a physician that he wouldn't have missed for worlds, and he departed with several servants and an air of great importance. He was away an hour, and when he got back he told us the poor boy was an awful sight, his face half torn away and his body too, and he feared he could not live.

While we sat at dinner under the stars and close to our log-fire for safety (for I think even the Miss felt uncomfortable in a country where lions roam about like this), news arrived that the poor herd-boy was dead.

We all felt sad.

The thought also considerably occupied our minds—where had the lion got to? And I think we all had a nervous night; I know *I* did.

A day or two passed peacefully by.

We all went for a picnic to a lovely range of hills about ten miles from our camp, from whence we looked down upon a wondrous panorama of plains and forests, hills and valleys, and the beautiful broad Kafue River winding in and out of it all. On some tiny islands just below us we could see several large crocodiles lying asleep in the sun.

We visited a pretty farm near the river and found a jolly-faced Englishman living quite alone with his native farmhands, but apparently happy as a sand-boy, though the appalling discomforts of his existence were writ everywhere.

He dwelt in a caia (a mud-hut with grass roof) which was pitch-dark for want of windows. Windows beyond the Zambesi are the *height* of luxury, but most settlers have a square hole left in their walls and stretch mosquito-net across it—or nothing. This farmer confessed he'd forgotten all about the hole till the caia was finished, and then it was too much trouble to have it done, so he put up with it. I would have died of depression in it. Darkness and gloom are almost death to me. We all trooped into cavernous blackness for the settler to "show us" his hut and belongings, and after knocking and bumping into each other and the furniture, and groping our way about, getting awful bruises on our foreheads and shins, we felt for chairs and packing-cases in the darkness and subsided on to them, while our new friend (who had evidently learnt to see without so much as a ray of light) discoursed loudly and cheerfully to us over the beauties of *this* trophy from Nyassa-land, *that* apron of yellow beads from the Tanganyika plateau, and *this* photo of Livingstone's monument, where Livingstone's heart is buried.

The natives wouldn't give up his heart, but insisted on cutting it out and burying it in their own country, they loved him so. His body lies in Westminster Abbey.

Every one sat (as we were shown these things) and said, "How lovely!" "That's a fine head!" "Yes, indeed!" "It's a wonderful country!" and so on, though not one of us could see one mortal thing, for it was like being in a tomb.

It was easy to make mistakes under such circumstances as these, and I wasn't at all surprised when (after the farmer had been holding up for our inspection, a number of photographs of half-clad Nyassa-land belles, dead elephants, and his English relations, all higgledy-piggledy) the O'Flaherty got confused in the dark, and remarked, "My word! Yes! Record tusks, I should think?" in response to the exhibit, at arms' length, of a large lady, smiling and recumbent, who had promised to come out and marry our host as soon as he should possess a dwelling fit for a Christian to live in.

"Shall I light a candle?" inquired our new friend coldly; "this is the photograph of my fiancée, lying on a sofa, *not* of an elephant."

"Of course! of course! I see!" murmured the O'Flaherty feebly, "this light is so deceiving."

Then to Cecil aside: "Why doesn't the fool light *something* before he shows photos? I might just as easily have asked what she weighed, for who could tell in here whether you were looking at a picture of an elephant, a woman, or a railway-train?" and the O'Flaherty, much perturbed, sat down in the gloom on a packing-case lid reversed, so that a row of four-inch French nails, with their business ends bristling, met him as he met them. The place seemed full of surprises.

A large hornet's nest was, we could hear, located in the ceiling, and cigars were handed round "to smoke 'em out; keep puffing, old man, and they'll leave you alone."

"But," said I, "what about the Miss and me?"

"Best smoke," said our host; so we all lit up, though I don't smoke or care for it.

He told us all about his life there, and it was a queer, lonely one enough. Only hard work made it go. A paper three months old lasted him another three. Even the advertisements became exciting, and he would often wonder had "the wife of a baronet" found the archangel she wanted in the shape of a cook who needed next to no sleep or fresh air? and what on earth use was it saying you wouldn't be responsible for your wife's debts when she advertised immediately underneath that she wouldn't be responsible for yours?

We came in on him as beings from another world, and we gave him English news and told him how things were going at home, and he told us stories of his life in exchange.

The week before, a leopard had come into the hut at night and carried off his dog. He beheld it being dragged through the doorway and jumped up shouting. The leopard dropped the dog, hardly hurt at all, and bounded away.

We now had to press on for our lunch, with which the servants had disappeared up the hill, and we asked him to join us and he did.

"I'll take a holiday! Dash my wig if I won't! What with ladies and all! Let me clean me face first."

"Oh, never you mind your face," said the O'Flaherty, "it just suits the country. I stopped washing ages ago." So he came along as he was.

We found lunch ready on the mountain-top.

Pisgah! So I christened it. The view was grand. Our new acquaintance said he hadn't had such a meal as we gave him "for years and years."

"I hate eating alone; it's too much trouble. I generally take a snack of something standing, and get so run down in consequence that twice I've had 'blackwater' and expect next time I'll snuff out, for if you get sick out in these places with no woman to nurse you, Lord help you!"

We reached camp long after dark that night, had some supper, and went to bed, all of us in the open except the Miss.

It was dawn and the camp still fast asleep in the open when we were all awoken by the most awful yells and bellows I have ever heard, coming from the ganger's kopje near, and, starting up in our beds, we saw him in pyjamas running towards our camp, and the word he bawled was "Lions!"

He dashed in amongst us (I still sitting up in bed, for I had no time to get out) and, sinking on to the O'Flaherty's couch, he told us that he had been standing at his hut-door watching the sun rise, and casually glancing at our camp and beds below, when to his horror he saw, walking out of the forest, straight through our camp, two large lions, stopping now and then to have a sniff at this or that.

There we all lay innocently asleep, little dreaming! Any instant he expected to see the lions lay hold of some one in bed and drag him out. But apparently they were not, at that moment, hungry.

Had they been, I doubt if this book would be in process of construction, for I being the only woman get-at-able, I'm sure they'd prefer me, whose blood would taste of neither nicotine, whisky, or other nasty things. And also, I'd probably be tenderer eating. It was a great disappointment to me that the Insular Miss was so insular that she thought it improper to sleep out of doors under *any* circumstances, for it had often cheered me, when I was the only woman of the party, thinking how, when she arrived, the lions would have her as well as me to choose from.

The ganger seemed much shaken at the incident. He had clapped a heavy board to his hut-door so that the lions couldn't get at his sleeping wife, and nothing less than whisky in large quantities would now revive him. In vain we offered him hot tea, which Big Ben had just brought

round. He said "tea was meeserable stuff on the top of a lion" (just as if he had swallowed a lion whole).

"Which way did the lions go?" we inquired, and he pointed to the jungle leading to the river.

"I wouldna' be surprised," said he (he was of Scotland) "ef one of them be not the lion what tasted of the herd-boy's bluid, and has tekken a fancy for more."

This cheerful prediction caused us all to gaze at each other with anything but joy, and though we were fairly lively while daylight was with us, as evening fell our spirits fell too, and when Cecil ordered Hymn-Book to have a four-foot thorn fence built round our camp, and we dined inside it, we felt rather more nervous than before.

"Things are warming up, Miss Britannia," said the O'Flaherty, sitting down to table, rubbing his hands with simulated glee, "the stationmaster says that the Kafue Lakes (our next goal) are alive with lions. They go about there in packs of eight and ten, the pretty dears! But, bless you, in a fortnight from now you'll be patting 'em on the head when they come round worrying for food. Lions are most affectionate creatures if properly treated. No one nowadays ever gives 'em a chance. Look at that dear old Bible tale of the lion's gratitude when the Christian martyr picked the thorn out of his paw taking a stroll one day. When the martyr was chucked to the same lion to eat in the arena a year later (and in a low voice reminded him of the thorn), that noble creature refused to take so much as a toe off his benefactor."

"I fancy," said the Insular Miss, "that you are confusing one of Æsop's Fables with Daniel in the lions' den. Oh! what is that sound? *What is it?*"

As the Miss often later observed, "I'm not a coward, but I bar becoming food for anything. It's not dignified. It destroys one's self-respect to even think of it."

The sound came again from about two miles off, the other side of the river.

We all stopped eating to listen. It was the first time that the Miss has learnt the meaning of that dread Voice in the Wilderness, and I couldn't help feeling decidedly pleased at her scared face in the light of the moon and camp-fire combined.

"Yes," breathed the O'Flaherty, "it's a lion sure enough. It's our camp is attracting him. Hymn-Book, take my bed back into my tent. I sha'n't sleep outside to-night."

CHAPTER XXVIII

WE thoroughly enjoyed our comparatively calm and quiet sojourn at the Kafue River.

The absence of the eternal trekking and putting up tents and packing our trunks, only to unpack them again the same evening, was such a relief, and we made the most of it, even hunting often on railway trolleys.

The site of our camp was very beautiful, though practically touching the railway-line. But this lonely end of the Cape to Cairo Railway, cutting through the forests stretching around us on all sides, breathed only enough of civilization to remind us all how far from it we all were.

The arrivals of the twice-a-week train at our little station were the two important social functions of the week. It got in at seven mornings and we would not miss it for worlds, for it brought into our midst news from the outside earth.

Cecil was even known *once* to give up his morning hunt that day to see the train pass through, and we all would hurry up the pretty line so soon as we heard the long whistle from the forests the other side of the river, and walk up and down the little mud platform and make friends through the windows with any one who cared to respond to our advances.

Most people did. They were mostly lonely men, and the sight of two white women in this benighted region was a pleasant surprise, so we soon got into conversation, and we would ask them for news of the Great World they had come from, and they would ask what we were doing here and how

we were doing it, and why we were doing it. Our adventures caused them to open their eyes, especially if they were women and new to the country.

"For the Lord's sake, *shut up*," breathed a worried-looking husband to the O'Flaherty, who hung on to the window in high feather, telling the lady and her spouse lion-tales, (and his own prowess thrown in) calculated to unnerve a Sandow or a lion-tamer, much less a wisp of a girl with a frightened, washed-out face, who screamed if a cockroach came along. "Shut up do, my dear fellow, whoever you may be! I've been married six years and only seen my wife for two days, 'cos I have to live up here. She came up with me after our wedding six years ago, and had to go in a canoe on the Zambesi and it upset, and she saw a croc in the water, and though I got her out without a scratch, she wouldn't come on, but left for her mamma in England same evening. I've *just* got her back—and you're spoiling it all with your d——d lions."

This in an agonized whisper, and the O'Flaherty had no time to repair matters, for the engine gave a shriek as of a lost soul, and the train moved on, the last words we heard being, "You *told* me, John, that the country was more civilized now."

That the lady discovered this statement to be an utter fabrication was proved by her tear-stained face peering out of the train at us ten days later on her way back south—alone.

She wept bitterly, leaning out of the window, but declared it "was all *too* much," and we were left to fill in the blanks ourselves, for soon she was gone.

We were waiting all this time at Kafue River for the train to bring us up things we wanted for our further travels. More chop-boxes were required, and we had left part of ours at Livingstone; also potatoes, flour, onions, oranges, butter,

Swiss milk, notepaper, tooth powder, ink, dubbin, dripping, jam, stockings, tape, rope, string, pins and needles, fish-hooks, ammunition, and many other necessities, taken with us only in small quantities, had now run short, and had to be replaced—at enormous expense.

Cecil and I often sat, unknown to our two friends, appalled at figures proving the mistake we had made in offering to give them a shooting trek in Central Africa on £20 a month a head. For alas, they were costing us, out of our own pockets, a very great deal more than that.

Any one who has lived or travelled beyond the Zambesi will realize it. Everything had had to be brought out from England and had become four times its value before it even touched Livingstone, the rail charges in Africa are so crushing. But that was only the beginning! We had already spent a small fortune bringing competent servants, baggage, furniture, and food for every one from Livingstone up at charges that frightened you. A penny orange was worth one shilling by the time it reached us, and all else in the same proportions.

Desiring to make our paying guests comfortable, we stinted nothing, and tinned luxuries were used very freely. Jam is not a luxury in England, but in Central Africa every mile adds to its price.

Our servants' liveries, their rail fares up, their wages (which were double what they should have been), and the hundred and one expenses of such an undertaking, all mounted up into a small fortune.

We certainly had no butchers' bill on trek, but the ammunition and licences would have paid ten butchers' bills generously. So that was no save as we had hoped.

We kept these facts as much as possible to ourselves for fear of causing our friends discomfort, but now and then we let it out on purpose as a plea for economy; and may our experience be a lesson to others in our shoes.

We recently (since our trek) saw a correspondence in *The Field* wherein one man declared you could not do a shooting trip beyond the Zambesi for under £80 per head per month, and another wrote saying you could *with care* do it for £50 per head per month.

At last the train brought us up the things we had been waiting for, and now we began to get ready for our departure once more into the Further Back of Beyond.

Our camp became a busy and animated scene. All day long, boxes were being unpacked, unnecessaries weeded out, and packed again light as possible to keep it down in weight to the eternal carrier-load of 50 lb. Once more Cecil stood by the hour in front of a hanging weighing-machine (held up by Hymn-Book or fastened to a tree), on to the hook of which were swung portmanteaus, chop-boxes, baskets, and tent and bedding bundles.

That is the great objection to carriers, the way you have to apportion the weights of your baggage. However, as it turned out, it was so much labour lost.

Three days before the one fixed for our start, every one of our carriers mutinied, and refused to go on with us. There had been signs of unrest in the carrier and servant camp for some days. Sulky looks and unwilling behaviour. If I went anywhere in my machila the men carried me anyhow, lumped me on to rocks, and grumbled at having to do a stroke of work, such as collecting firewood for our very necessary camp-fire at nights, although they had now sat in a ring on the ground for two weeks making holiday and being paid well for it.

One morning the smouldering flame burst out, and Hymn-Book came running to our tents to say that he had, according to instructions, told the men they were to be ready to trek again on the following Monday morning early (this being Friday) and they one and all refused to accompany us any further on our travels. When Hymn-Book and Big Ben

said they'd "got to" (having been engaged formally by the Native Commissioner for us for four months) the fifty carriers had a kind of war dance, which finished by Hymn-Book and Big Ben being half-murdered.

Now, none of this, dear Exeter Hall, was because they were not well treated, but because they had been too well treated ; in fact, utterly and completely spoilt. They had had the time of their lives with good pay, and treatment as kind and considerate as it was possible to show ; they had gorged on meat and grain and on all they asked for, all these months, till they were so fat they could barely move ; their ill behaviour had been too often passed over in silence ; and long spells of rest at different camps had made the trek for them more of a holiday than a task.

In fact, the different settlers at Kafue had seen quite enough of the way we spoilt them, to tell us, before the mutiny came, that we were also spoiling the whole labour-market for all of them who had to live there, and prophesied trouble all round.

Now it was here.

The Soldier Man interviewed them all, and asked what grievance had they ?

None—not one—could be found, save that Hymn-Book had told them that we were now about to journey into yonder Blue Mountains, and into those mountains they would not go, "for fear they never returned."

In vain Cecil promised them they should all return, and that he would see to it. It was merely a half-empty excuse for want of a better one ! They were in fact, rich now, with the regularly paid wages they had had, and each man had made for himself pounds of valuable buck biltong, which other shooting parties reserve to their own use, and which is worth 4s. and 5s. a pound down south. They wished to return to their kraals and live for a year on the profits,

and although we could legally have forced them to fulfil their contract, we preferred to let them go, rather than take into the wilderness of our further travels, sulky, ill-conditioned men who would inevitably cause grave trouble and risk when they once had us in their power.

Hearing all this, I said to Cecil, "Oh, let's have done with the dirty brutes! Let's have a wagon instead! That won't smell, or mutiny, or eat up all our biltong!" And as every one agreed, Cecil cut the carriers their last pay because of their broken contract, and told Hymn-Book to clear them at once out of the camp.

Black looks were the reply, and for a time things looked ugly, and Cecil sat with his loaded revolver and the O'Flaherty with his, and servants were held in readiness to run for all the few white men living around if any violence were shown. But finally the fifty men departed down the line vastly chagrined to find that we had no intention of paying their way back by train to Magoy, and already I fancy beginning to think they had not known when they were well off. And so we saw them no more.

A wagon and oxen, driver and voorlooper had now to be found, and the stationmaster told us that a Mr. Ronald owned a wagon and team, and farmed about thirty miles from Kafue, and might be able to hire it to us, as it was now the slack season on farms.

Cecil was preparing to hie him to this farm on foot, and see Mr. Ronald himself, when he heard that a young fellow called Banbury, the son of a Mr. and Mrs. Banbury on another farm called "Duiker Dale," about fifteen miles away, could get us a wagon from a Greek who had a cattle-farm near them—and that young Banbury was now in Kafue at the post-office, getting his letters.

Cecil and we all went up the line and ran young Banbury to earth making hay in the post-office. How we ever got



HUNTING ON TROLLEY ON THE KAFUE RAILWAY

our letters out of that post-office Heaven knows ! There was no one but the postmaster (who was also stationmaster) to take charge of it, and as the wretched man had to occasionally sleep, eat, go in search of buck for food (the forest is your butcher's shop up here, as on trek) and get recreation, or his brain would have burst, the place simply had to look after itself for part of every day. The farmers and settlers came in twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty miles for their letters and parcels, and had often travelled days for the purpose, having perhaps seen no mails for weeks or months. No one could expect them to sit down and wait, because the postmaster hadn't had any meat for a week, and was now pursuing an elusive eland twenty miles away, where also a man-eating lion was known to roam the forest and might have met the stationmaster ?

At one time the stationmaster, a charming little man, used to lock up his post-office when he went forth to slay and hunt, but the farmers simply kicked open the door or broke the windows, saying they were "not going to wait." They had to trek their first stage back perhaps before dark, and even were that not so, when your wife was last heard of, dying of forcible feeding in Holloway Gaol, three months ago, you can't wait hours to know is she alive or dead, and have the women in England yet murdered McKenna, Asquith, and Lloyd George ?

So to save expense the post-office was now left open, and every one helped themselves in the occasional enforced absence of its head. No doubt we lost many letters like this, and as for papers sent us from England half of them must have been appropriated by lonely farmers dying for English and world's news and to whom no one ever sent a paper. Well, I dare say they meant more even to them than to us, so, like much else, we "grinned and bore it" (as one of my children used to say).

We brought young Banbury back to camp to lunch with us, and it was arranged that the Soldier Man should return with him at once to his father's farm and see what could be settled up about a wagon. He also seemed mad-keen on accompanying us on our travels, and drew thrilling pictures of the evils that might befall us if we tried to any further travel this great unknown country alone. He was, in fact, offering to become our guide, and one of the curious parts of life beyond the Zambesi is the way every one is ready to throw up a job at a moment's notice, quite confident of getting it again directly he wants it, because white men are so few and far between. Several railway officials had already offered their services as guide to us, and, indeed, would have thrown up a good salary and prospects, "just for the food and fun of the thing," over and over again had we wanted them.

We all began by being deeply touched at our undoubted popularity, till it began to dawn on us that we were taken for semi-millionaires wandering the earth for pleasure—and every one wanted a slice out of the plum cake.

Apparently only Dukes of Westminster and others like them come up here on shooting trips. Cecil looks so distinguished. Also soldierly! A real live British officer in these regions is rather rare, and, of course, all the world over, the common idea is that the British officer has money. It's an extraordinary idea, for he generally has none, but it's partly his own fault, for he can't help looking and acting like it, and yet sometimes has no idea he does. The "airs" he is accredited with, he is often quite unconscious of. They are simply part of his life of comparative adulation, ease, and pleasure; his habit to command and be obeyed since he first joined as a boy of eighteen; the military etiquette and politeness which are the atmosphere he breathes. The attentions of every one, from mamma who wants to marry a troop of daughters, and papa who likes the regimental

port, down to the laundress who knows that the soldier-servant never makes a list of the washing and she's in for a good thing. The same with all the tradespeople round. Every one is polite, sweet, and complaisant to the generous and considerate military officer of Cecil's type, and life is more or less a path of rose-leaves, till you leave that charmed regimental circle and rub shoulders with real people who have to struggle and push to live at all.

Since Army Reform came in, the life needs little of struggle. You've only got to sail along and "be good," and you go steadily up. The salutes and the "Yes, sirs," if you say "Yes," and the "No, sirs," if you say "No," the smiles, the dinner parties, and the country-house invitations, all increase in proportion to your length of service and rising rank.

During Cecil's absence, I conversed with the O'Flaherty on many topics. We had hot discussions over religions, for one thing. One should never try to alter people's religious beliefs, because I am sure it is not the Religion that matters, but how you live up to it. Our young friend, however, being a Roman Catholic, was convinced that only those of his faith could enter Heaven. The rest of us were destined for a most unpleasant fate.

"And the queer part," said I, "is, that there are a lot of other religions which firmly believe the same of you. So I wonder what will happen?"

"Don't you believe in the Bible?" he inquired.

"No! Not as you do! How can any reasoning sensible person believe in a document that tells you that Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel, were the only four people on the earth, that Cain killed Abel, and then went off somewhere, married, and had children? Then look at the Old Testament—Jehovah! No human being even could be guilty of such cruelties and tyranny. The Power that I believe in, is one that is worthy of all love and reverence. The life and character of Christ

are beautiful, and thereby show a marked advance in the different writers' conception of a Divinity, which fact alone seems to point to the Bible being a human document—part history, part fancy, part fiction *pur et simple*, all mixed up together. Yet it is a most beautiful book, and I, as a student of Theosophy, quite believe that some of it may have been written 'under inspiration,' and that anyhow no more lovely example of a life of sweetness and goodness than that of Christ was ever given to the world."

"Ah! I am glad you have said that!"

"And let me say too that I love your religion, in spite of its faults. All religions are beautiful when mirrored in the beautiful lives led in their service. Each religion shows such lives. Each religion has its Christ—whom we all adore. I hope I have not hurt you?"

And the dear O'Flaherty said, "Oh no! You have pleased me. Fresh air is always health-giving."

And then we went for a stroll in the forest.

Young Banbury and the Soldier Man were away two days and nights. I missed the latter very much, for the O'Flaherty and the Miss went out a good bit together, as was only right, and my companion was gone. But I had dear little "Jane." And I had the stationmaster. And the storekeeper. And the gangers. And the birds, the flowers, and the trees. So I was not unhappy. When the absentee returned I was somewhat worried to learn that young Banbury, sick, poor boy, of his dull farmlife, had asked Cecil, already so short of money, to take him as our guide on our travels, the same to cost us rather more than we could face, these very hard times. I sympathized with the boy (who, of course, regarded us as rich people), but I knew we simply couldn't afford it in any way. You can't feed any one in the life we were living, and in the way we lived, without big expense. Of course, the extra meat he ate we should not notice at all. It was

alarmingly costly things like tinned milk, jam, bacon, biscuits, dried fruits, and preserves, potatoes, and tinned vegetables, tinned fish, and the hundred and one other stores which must be carried and opened extra, and which I knew were beyond our means. He was to receive a salary in addition ; and white men's salaries are high beyond the Zambesi.

He was also to have ammunition free to shoot without stint, and I wasn't surprised to hear that the boy was in the seventh heaven of delight ! Of course he was ! And I don't blame him, and was sure he would prove a most charming travelling companion. The rich little realize what a joy it is to be able to give pleasure to others, nor how hard it is to appear mean !

I began to feel rather in a mood of reckless despair ! What did anything matter ? The tide for me was too strong. I would enjoy it all while I could, and worry myself no more, getting as much fun out of it all as was possible. To worry was certainly no use. My old original trek in the Transvaal, carefully worked out with the ex-mounted policeman, who was to help me run the show on economical lines, and who knew the country and prices by heart, would have cost us each only £12 a month all told. I had in the beginning wished to do this same trek.

But Cecil had not enough confidence in my judgment and my knowledge of the Transvaal. A pity, for my figures were correct, and so we came up here instead.

However ! here we were ! A short life and a merry one ! That must be the motto ! So I, that day, smothered my fears and anxiety (as did our Soldier Man) and we let them trouble us no more for the present.

Young Banbury and Cecil had fixed up a wagon with a Greek cattle-farmer near Duiker Dale, who had made a fortune in three years, trekking into Barotseland and buying

cattle at 10s. a head, marching them up here and selling them for . . . Heaven knows what! . . . The wagon was to be £30 a month, and all was now arranged for us to leave Kafue River in a day or two, so soon as the Banburys could send their own wagon for our possessions, in order that we might camp for a week on their farm (which was quite in the wilds and fine shooting), by which time the hired wagon would be at our service.

In two days the Banbury wagon arrived (that was £3) and the packing of it began amid great confusion and noise.

Already our camp was full of camp followers of all descriptions. Every single servant here picked up a "slave" to work for him, generally a skinny little lad of eight or ten, who did all the hard and dirty work while his "master" stood by and expressed approval or the reverse. Sometimes the slave was a grown man, afflicted in some way, and appearing to have lately resided in the Congo, for again several were minus an ear, a hand, a nose, or a foot. These satellites all naturally lived and fed at our expense, but we didn't pay them anything.

We also engaged six machila men to carry my machila for me or any one who should need to use it on occasion. These fellows were also to be gun-bearers and game-trackers and cure the skins and horns, so they had a double use.

We were sorry to leave Kafue River for many reasons. The few white men settled or officially there, were all such good sorts and showed us every kindness, and when the morning came that we left they all crowded to see us off.

"God speed!" they cried.

The Insular Miss sat on the wagon with the O'Flaherty, looking happy and content. He had been sick and was not up to walking. A touch of the country fever I think.

Cecil and I had decided to get one day alone together. We

had so much to talk over. So we went, on foot, and my machila was carried behind me. We started before the wagon, and plunging into the brilliant flowering spring forests, now a blaze of colour and tender green, we were soon once more in the wide peaceful unknown.

Lovely birds flew around us. Glades and vleis stretched away into dim fascinating distances with here and there a buck feeding, but too far to go after. The sky overhead was a deep bright blue. The sun not too hot. A breeze tempered it.

And I pulled off my tobacco-coloured felt hat and carried it in my hand, and letting all care drop off me I laughed aloud, because it was so good, a day like this, to be alive and to have the world before one ; and to be with the man one understood.

CHAPTER XXIX

ALL day we marched.

The country grew more and more beautiful. Now forest, now great open plains where the air felt delicious, and all the time we were gently ascending into those same blue mountains that had so frightened our carriers.

Up to noonday Cecil and I saw no sign of the wagon, the Insular Miss, the O'Flaherty, nor any of our retinue. We had got a good start of them.

We soon noticed that wagon-travelling is much slower than carriers. Our wagon went about three miles an hour, and at every spruit half an hour would be lost loading it up again because it had overturned, or digging it out of the mud because it had stuck.

So when we reached a place at which we decided to halt for lunch, we sat down and had a long wait before the faint far-off yells of the driver to his patient team of oxen were borne to us upon the clear air.

Our halting place was in an almost park-like piece of country. The trees grew dotted well apart as if so arranged, for it's noticeable that Nature does not often arrange her trees so. They are generally too thickly crowded, but here you could have camped a regiment under the ample shady spaces between. A broad, clear-running stream ending in a miniature Victoria Falls cascade, the banks fringed with maidenhair and flowers, made it an ideal camping spot, and I was all for stopping here altogether for the week ahead of us,

and not going on to Duiker Dale, but Cecil thought it would hurt the feelings of the Banburys, who looked forward eagerly to our company in their lonely life. So I agreed, though not without a sigh, for I was quite in love with the spot.

When at last the wagon came up, and then the retinue, we had a nice lunch under the trees. Jonas made us tea, and we found it extra good because of the beautifully clear sweet water. The Kafue River looks very lovely in body, flowing through the land, borrowing its tropical blue from the sky above, but when you ladled it up you found it muddy and a peculiar taste in it—of crocodiles and natives combined, I expect. But here, where we have again left mankind behind us, the water was as God made it—good.

After lunch our two menfolk went down stream and bathed in it, and the servants and carriers were also to be seen gaily disporting themselves in the distance off again. The Miss and I had to be content with “paddling.” Alas, poor women. How, right through life, at almost every turn, woman is handicapped and deprived, by her very sex, of many of life’s pleasures and compensations! How this hot day we envied the men! And as we paddled, the Miss and I discussed again Woman’s Suffrage. Like all “antis,” her arguments were very weak and negative, indeed funny. Women ought not to have the vote mainly, I gathered, because they *hadn’t* got it. The anti-reasoning practically amounts to that.

“Women have not the same brain power as men.” Therefore they mustn’t try to get it. Of course they have, or will, very soon, once they obtain their liberty, but the “antis” simply neither want their liberty themselves nor desire to evolve, and, if they can help it, they aren’t going to allow us more ambitious souls to evolve either.

“If that’s how you feel,” said I, standing in a deep clear pool and addressing the “Miss,” seated contentedly on the

bank, "no one wants to force *your* liberty on you, but why try to stop us getting ours? If you *antis* are content to remain grubs, crawling along the ground, why prevent us from growing into something better, and using the wings which will lift us from our captivity and give us the freedom and scope we long for? Is that fair or reasonable? Crawl, if crawl *you* must! But leave us a chance to soar!"

"I cannot really see," said the Miss, "what women have to complain of. I am sure they have a very good time in life."

"Which remark only proves that you, and other *antis*, have had a good time. That really should be the anti-Suffrage motto: '*We* are all right and that's all we care for!' I may be wrong, but I don't believe you will ever find that any woman is an anti-Suffragette who is a worker, or whose life has been spoilt, or partly spoilt, by the man-made laws. The women who are *antis* are those who, like you, 'have had a good time.' Well, they are lucky, but to me it seems that all the more should they try to help those who have not. Show me a woman who has felt the effects of the keen injustice of things on women, and if you tell me she is an *anti*, then I can only reply one thing—she is also a fool."

"Oh, come now!"

"I mean it. You are not a fool. But what's the matter with *you* is, you have too many of the good things of life. And—you have not been unhappily married. Remember, that the world is full of women to-day, who went into marriage with the highest ideals. Its complete sanctity, its high obligations, its opportunity for self-sacrifice and devotion. And remember what our laws are in marriage. As I have always regarded it (and many women, to-day, besides myself), from the day that a husband breaks that marriage contract, the woman should be free as air to marry again without blame, if she so wishes it."

"Well," said the Miss, "you may be right. I was never

married. Why has not the Church, in the Divorce Commission, made some fuss about the laxity allowed to men ? ”

“ Because the Church is *He*,” I replied. “ from the Archbishop down to the sexton. I often smile when I hear the Church called *She*. It sounds pretty, but it isn’t true. The women do all the unpleasant uninteresting work, and ten women go to church for one man, and they look after the poor and make clothes for them, but they’ve no voice in anything, not even in the way the Bible shall be twisted about. Some man or other decided that Christ’s saying, “ What God hath joined together let no man put asunder ” meant Matrimony. Yet man too often sunders the tie with his own infidelity, but another man, the judge, is not permitted to complete the job and set the outraged woman free. What wicked juggling ? Man (not Woman) has placed *his* construction upon these much-quoted words. And so—it’s finished and final ! Women are asking, may not that famous saying mean exactly the opposite ? May it not be that Christ meant that God brooks no *human* interference between the true love of man and woman, at whatever stage in life it comes to them ? Look also at our marriage service ! It contains passages, invented by men, which are a disgrace to a civilized religious ceremony, and at which the heart of many a pure young girl has stood still with fear and disgust. And so it goes on, in everything in life. The women, the mothers of the race, are of no more account than a pack of children ! ”

Said the Miss, “ Oh, but that isn’t really true, you know ! Look at that beautiful sentiment, ‘ the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. ’ ”

“ It’s the funniest I’ve ever heard. How can you rule the world, or help to, when you are never allowed a say ? Mothers may bring up their children as carefully as they will, it is of little use, for we are under the tutelage of man, and we know how hopeless it all is, and how our boys will go out into

life and follow in their father's footsteps. 'All's fair in love and war'—and the woman pays the bill. I want, by the by, to ask the men of England if all is 'fair in war,' why they abuse the tactics of the Militants? Or do they only mean their *own* wars?"

"You feel very strongly about it," remarked the Miss, examining her bare toes.

"I feel," said I, "that I can, in some measure, forgive and understand the men for opposing Woman's Emancipation. They've had the whole apple so long they hate to think of sharing it. I am sure there are thousands of good just-minded men who in time will come to see this matter right. But the woman 'anti!' *She is deliberately fouling her own nest.*"

The Miss here remarked that Suffragettes were "so unlady-like," so I climbed out of my pool laughing, for the men had finished their bathe and it was time to trek on again.

Towards two in the afternoon we emerged on to one of the large flat plains upon which great distances could be seen, and upon the horizon were more hills, and as we approached these, about 4 P.M., I in my machila, and the two bearers singing in most melodious chorus that same ditty where each line ended "Wo kunda! Curry na yo!" we saw a figure advancing to meet us, and it was young Banbury coming forth to welcome us to Duiker Dale.

While he was still a mile away, my machila men suddenly dropped me, the pole having slipped from one man's shoulder. The jar was awful, for they were running hard. Cecil, left quite a distance behind, seeing me prostrate on the ground and the machila men going tooth and nail for each other (each doubtless blaming his comrade) came running to my aid, and ran so hard that his thermos flask (one of our greatest comforts) broke, bumping up and down on his back.

We missed that flask terribly during our subsequent travels, but of course could not get another.

By the time Jack Banbury got up to us we were comparatively close to the mountains, and realized what a beautiful spot we had come to. On the hog's back of one ridge stood the Banburys' own little settlement. A few mud and grass caias.

No other signs descriptive of the homely word "farm" were apparent, and it's the same all over the far Rhodesias. You trek a month through the nethermost wilderness and you come upon a caia stuck upon a mountain-top, and a white man sitting outside it smoking a pipe, with no faintest sign anywhere of what he's doing there, how he is doing it, or *why* he's doing it.

He tells you he's "farming," and you look round and say "Oh!"

He ought to know, certainly!

Perchance, as the sun sets, you'll descry some very small cows being led over the plain, and, as sitting watching small cows seems up here to pay, there's evidently nothing to worry about on the man's behalf. He lives in supreme discomfort, and his loneliness is as that of Alexander Selkirk. But the cattle increase, and there's lots of time to think, and to read the ragged "Pink 'Un" left here a year ago by some one. He tells you that now and then he girds up his loins, gathers together his cattle and treks them up to the Congo, where, if he is careful to wrap each ox up in flannel while in the tsetse-fly belt, he gets huge prices for them at the Star of the Congo and around. I would like to travel with oxen wrapped in flannel, they'd look so funny.

Apparently Mr. and Mrs. Banbury were farming on these lines, for not so much as a mealie or a lucerne patch was to be seen, nor a plough, nor a barn, nor anything else that one connects with farming, to give any other impression.

While Cecil and Jack Banbury hied off to find a suitable camping place for our camp, with the machila men to clear it, the Insular Miss, the O'Flaherty, and I, sat in Mr. and Mrs. Banbury's caia on the mountain-top and discoursed with them, drinking tea made just outside in a very rough shelter called "the kitchen." It was made of two poles with a bit of calico stretched across the top for the sun, and in this highly primitive shelter poor little Mrs. Banbury, the dearest little woman, cooked and slaved, as women will, for her menfolk three, her husband, her son, and a "paying guest," a young gentleman newly out from England and supposed to be "learning farming."

Having learnt it all within five minutes of his arrival (now a year ago), he since improved his mind and physique by scouring the country with Jack Banbury after big game, the fond parents in England sending him cheques with touching confidingness and loving hopes that he was picking up a knowledge of everything, from mealies to tobacco, cattle to sheep, seed-time, harvest, buying, selling, and everything else a Rhodesian farmer should know.

The Banburys often felt worried, for they had had no correspondence with the dear parents. The boy was on his own, and was having, as may be inferred, the time of his life.

The caia we sat in, was primitive, yet gave clear evidences of the gentle arranging hand of a woman. A jug of scarlet trumpet-flowers stood on the rude but clean scrubbed table in the centre. The chairs all had for seats the different skins of buck and panther shot up here. Even the sling canvas deck-chair had had the canvas removed and a fine glossy brown impala skin substituted. The mud walls were thick with trophies. Plenty of light and air came in from square openings left in the walls, not too large, for fear of a lion scrambling through. This was the living room. The bedrooms were separate caias, the married couple in one, the

two boys in the other. Mrs. Banbury expressed herself as "half loving the country and half hating it," and it's the feeling many women have, and some men. But men have so many compensations in the life! One is, their very scanty attire, and the absence of all need for collars, shirts, or even soap and water unless it appeals to them as a sensation—for, to look at, the men who took baths daily, and others we met who didn't, all appeared much the same. Above all, the hunter's life, so dear to the heart of the male, makes life beyond the Zambesi attractive to men, but women usually have no such resources and but scanty compensations.

Mrs. Banbury had lived in Johannesburg but had come up here because she was so unhappy without her husband

"It's a queer existence," said she, smiling and bustling round, getting us tea, "and how long I can stick it I don't know. Even if one's nights were ordinary! But you must either roast, or take the plank down (the only door) and wonder all night (with half of you asleep and the other half awake) is that a lion sniffing at the back and what shall I do when he walks in? Still—" (and here she went to the open doorway and stood looking out over the wonderful scene around, and her figure was flooded in the haze of the blue and golden afternoon outside)—"still—I love it all—sometimes."

The Soldier Man here walked in, very hot and dirty.

"I have found a beautiful spot to camp on. Will you all come out and look at it?"

We followed him outside, and he pointed to the mountain opposite, part of a chain of hills stretching far across the plains. It was so near, as the crow flies, that a very long rope might almost have been stretched across. But between the two, a deep grass valley lay, and it would take half an hour to do the journey.

The site chosen was perfect, and much activity was apparent on it already, for our tents and things were being

carried up the hill from the wagon below, streams of servants and carriers toiled up and down, and others were busy clearing spaces for our tents with axes, whose musical clang on the trees and shrubs came clearly to us upon the still air of the African afternoon.

A wooded plateau standing out from the mountain-side about halfway up, was to be our home for the next week. The forests grew up on all sides, and our tents would have for background some five hundred feet of mountain sheer up behind them. The plateau (just large and long enough to accommodate us comfortably, and our retinue also, not too near ourselves) would, one could see, command a lovely and extensive view of the whole country below, and so eager were we to stand and see it for ourselves that we bade the Banburys good-bye and hurried down to the valley, having first asked them all to come to lunch next day.

We crossed the valley, climbed our own hill, and were just in time to superintend putting up our tents, every one having their own ideas as to the exact position they liked to be in. This done, we sat outside in a leafy parlour made by overhanging trees and creepers, and supped, while the sun set away the other side of the Kafue River, now many miles away, but distinctly seen from up here winding through the land like a bright blue ribbon.

I will never forget the Duiker Dale sunsets !

Night fell softly over the land below us. Red lights twinkled from the mountain opposite. The Banburys' kitchen fire and camp-fires made a pretty show.

The night was lovely and I had my bed carried into the open.

A patch of young green turf made a carpet, and my bed was placed on it, and as some slight protection against lions I had my mosquito net put up. Lions don't like unusual things.

My bed was close to the plateau edge, the tree-tops of

thick forest growing to within a few yards of my feet. But the descent was so sharp that one could have leapt clear over, falling into the trees below.

Every one was asleep by ten—all except myself, I think. At any rate, all was utterly still.

I came out of my tent in my dressing-gown, and for some moments stood on the edge, and looked out over the vast night. A single little red fire flickered on the black plain, miles and miles away. Some wandering Mashakalumbwe or trader crossing the loneliness of the country and fearful of wild beasts, no doubt. Strange ! The lives that are led out here !

Then I got inside my mosquito net and lay me down.

But I could not sleep. It was all too wonderful. I was almost too happy.

I looked up at the spangled sky, velvety dark, strewn with stars.

Now, there sped across the heavens that mysterious traveller, the shooting star—and—(I was growing sleepy at last) surely it fell from straight overhead, down into the cool wet grass round my bed, and lay there now, burning itself out ? . . . And I leaned my face to my mosquito net to look down at it.

Poor little glow-worm ! Nothing so grand or free are you as a shooting star !

The pretty humble little lamp lay in the grass, as if for my special use as a nightlight.

And lying looking at it, I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXX

WE all awoke as the sun rose, and gathering together in dressing-gowns on our mountain shelf, sat and had tea, admiring the view below, as well as the beauties of the wooded heights rising sheer behind us.

It was evident that we were well in the midst of big game again, and, indeed, game of all kinds. Flights of sand-grouse now and then passed over the plain below, and indeed right over our heads once. Many fascinating sounds of beast and bird came from out the bush on the mountain sides.

The Insular Miss produced her "field glasses" and examined the scenery, and we all took turns to do the same. I could see nothing through them half as well as with my own eyes, but that is generally my case with field glasses. My sight is very long, but the Miss declared she could see many creatures invisible to the naked eye, and as, during our travels, they were always so far off that by the time you got there the animal had moved on elsewhere (or had never been there) one never discovered what it meant.

One needed no glasses to see that the Banbury colony this fine morning was up and doing, and that Mrs. Banbury, in a spotted muslin dressing-gown, was "bossing up" the Kafirs over breakfast, and reminded me of the old Cruikshank pictures of Mrs. Squeers at Dotheboys Hall cracking the boys over the head with the brimstone and treacle spoon as she served it out. Only dear little Mrs. Banbury was not any

sour-visaged Mrs. Squeers, but a pretty, sweet, little woman, occasionally much tried by the raw Kafir, which was the only servant obtainable up here, and tried she must have been when she seized the wooden spoon she was stirring the porridge with, gave her kitchen-boy a crack over his woolly head with it, then in her perturbation went on stirring.

After breakfast, partaken of in our leafy parlour where the shade was now grateful, the Miss and I announced to Jonas the cook that we were coming to the kitchen to make bread which should not be of such bullet-like consistency that every one had indigestion.

The awful trouble I had on our travels over Jonas and that eternal bread question! He consumed huge quantities of fine white English flour. Yet never could we get bread fit to eat, and there was always some good reason why, the main one being that it had "not rise."

Every one being profoundly ignorant of the mysteries of bread-making, it had, up till now, appeared impossible to discover whether the bread "not rising" was due to the carelessness or ignorance of Jonas, or to such forces of nature as the sun and the wind, upon whose shoulders Jonas always shifted the responsibility. Either the sun was too hot or the wind was too cold, and neither element ever by any chance seemed propitious to our bread. Whenever we met a white man we asked, "Can you tell us about our bread?" but he never could. His own was always vile, and he'd given it up in despair, his inside gradually taking on a cast-iron lining in self-defence. But our insides were as yet not prepared, and heavy groans came from tents at night, and when you called out "What's the matter?" you were always told that Jonas's bread was stubbornly refusing to be digested and hadn't descended to its proper place at all, but "is lying on my chest like a ton-load of bricks."

Now the O'Flaherty was quite ill, and put in on to the

bread. He said at breakfast time that "it really must end," and we all agreed, and every one worked themselves up into a temper. We had been remonstrating with Jonas ever since our Victoria Falls camp, when the O'Flaherty used to tell Jonas that if the bread didn't rise to-morrow, Jonas and the bread would be kicked over the chasm into the Devil's Boiling Pot, and added, "And neither you nor the bread will *ever* rise again there, Jonas."

I see Jonas now in the Palm Grove, taking orders for the day from the Soldier Man, and weeping.

"At eight, breakfast, Jonas. At nine, you and the other servants will all go and wash in the river—and come out again. At eleven o'clock, Jonas, saucepan inspection. At twelve, Jonas, you will put your bread to rise. At one it will have risen—in time for lunch."

"But, mastah, if cool wind come, and Jonas no can help wind which God sending, bread *no* will rise!"

(Jonas would be the joy of the orthodox person. He always blames God for everything.)

"Silence, Jonas!" says Cecil with military sternness, "You have your orders. Obey them! Fall out!"

However, we were all now getting rather tired of our bullet-like bread being thrust on to the sun, the wind, or Providence, and a brilliant idea entered my head. Send and ask Mrs. Banbury (who was coming to lunch) to come now and spend the morning, and show us how to make bread, and tell us whose fault it all is—Jonas, or that unseen Power which seems bent on making the world so uncomfortable for us all. Myself, I've long suspected it's all our own doing and no one else's.

So I ran into my tent and scribbled a chit to Mrs. Banbury, and calling a carrier, I sent him running with it down the mountain side and across the plain. I could distinctly see Mrs. Banbury making her own bread on her own mountain-

top, and the Miss declared that it was also quite plain (through her field glasses) that the Banbury bread was "rising like anything."

It made one's mouth water !

I went to the camp kitchen and told Jonas that to-day this horrible bread mystery was going to be cleared up once for all. The Missis from the other mountain was coming over, and would make bread, we all standing by.

Jonas turned as pale as a native can, which alone spoke volumes. To start with, he knew we would discover that he had stolen our English flour wholesale, asking double the quantity needed daily. And so it transpired.

Mrs. Banbury was soon seen, being borne across the valley below in my machila which I sent for her.

At this sight Jonas was seized with giddiness and a great longing to return to his own family in Livingstone, or be caught up to Heaven in a chariot of fire, I expect, or anything else that should transport him elsewhere.

He stood shivering, and watching Mrs. Banbury being swung blithely along, occasionally waving her little hand cheerily to us, and several times he tried to noiselessly vanish into the bush, but the O'Flaherty, very sick, in pyjamas and a dressing-gown, said, "Not much !" and laid hold of him.

That morning was one of extreme misery to Jonas, and was the downfall of his reputation as a baker or an honest man.

Mrs. Banbury completely gave him away.

He had robbed us of half our precious white flour, and as for the sun and the wind and Providence, they never stood Jonas in any good stead again, and had been grossly maligned.

We all collected to see the new bread made. Dear little Mrs. Banbury, immensely delighted at the flattering tribute to her powers, measured and mixed, and denounced Jonas with a spoon, in between, as a proper "skellum" of the first water, a thief, a lazy rascal, a fibber.

Each name she called him, Jonas replied, "No, missis. I *no* that," but his voice was drowned in an indignant chorus from us, "*You are!*"

Finally, the bread was made, looking lovely and white, (and not black, as Jonas made it, forgetting to wash his hands), and Mrs. Banbury (who knew the gentle Kafir by heart) decreed that a new oven for it must at once be made near our tents, so that we could all sit and watch it, as if left to Jonas's oven, he would take care to spoil it of set purpose.

"Oh, come now!" said the Soldier Man, "*surely* not? He is a Christian—a converted Christian."

"The very reason," said Mrs. Banbury; "the converted Christians are the worst of the lot."

"Remember my cake at Kafue River," said the Miss, assisting to carry the things along. "He was so furious at my making it, that not one soul could eat it, Mrs. Banbury! *Bullets* wasn't the word!"

"Ugh, you angel!" said Mrs. Banbury. "*You* are a beauty!"

"No, missis," said Jonas, "*I not* that."

We had a royal lunch. The bread was delicious, and Mr. Banbury, his son Jack, and the "Paying Guest" all graced our board as well.

We, of course, discussed our further travels, and Jack Banbury was prepared to escort us to the furthestmost ends of the earth if we would trust ourselves to him.

Our first trek was to be to the Kafue Lakes, which, from up here, lay in a long silver sheen upon the distant blue.

"But it's not so simple as it looks," said Jack, "for it's four marches and practically no water between. I know where some water is—very little—and if you missed it, you'd all die of thirst."

"How exciting!" exclaimed the Miss. "I must be sure

and tell darling mamma of all this," and she fetched from her tent "My Jottings," and entered down, "Long marches. No water. Die of thirst."

Every few mails the anxious mother of our Insular Miss had the formerly even tenor of her quiet life at Muddlethorpe-on-Sea, Sussex, stirred up by an epistle from her daughter announcing some new danger we were going into, the missive concluding with directions as to what was to be done with the Miss' various belongings, "in case I never come back."

For fear she should forget what dangers to mention, they all went down into "My Jottings," and when the camp was in the throes of "letters home," out came "My Jottings" and was referred to.

We were all longing to see the Kafue Lakes. Set far out in the wilderness, few people had ever been there, probably never a woman, white or black. The shooting would be wonderful, and the lions numerous.

Meanwhile it was a happy life we led at Duiker Dale while "waiting for the wagon" that was to carry us on again into this great unknown country.

We made expeditions into the bush and the mountains, nearly always bringing back something for the pot; a buck, some korhaan, pheasants, a couple of hares, sand-grouse, and once there were great rejoicings over a bush-pig Cecil shot, a special delicacy as a change of meat. We sent part of it across to the Banburys, and they and we often exchanged meat like this.

At Kafue River we had met a Mr. Ronald farming with a brother about thirty miles from Duiker Dale, and hearing how for weeks we had not seen a green vegetable, he was so kind as to send us, directly he got back to his farm, a large sack of assorted vegetables, telling us, when finished, to send a carrier for more. So now we had lovely English vegetables every day and had already sent a carrier for a new supply.

It took two men two days, sometimes three, to get there, and the same back. They refused to go alone because of lions.

Three of us felt better now that Jonas's bread was more digestible. It seemed that he must have been both lazy and careless before, it was so different now. But the O'Flaherty was not well and could hardly go shooting at all. He lived in pyjamas and a dressing-gown, and in this garb just loafed about the camp, often sitting hours on end with me and the Miss (we sitting working and mending or reading outside our tents) and giving us his views of life generally; some very amusing. He was a nice fellow, was the O'Flaherty, but held the same extraordinary outlook on life that most men seem to have, which outlook we women, especially rebels like myself, are beginning to resent so much.

One distorted axiom was the dear old one that the earth and all that therein is, belongs by right divine to the male half of the population, women being allowed to live upon it with some degree of comfort so long as they be young, good-looking, happily married, or of independent means. God help the rest!

He was taken ill again a day or two after that, and the Miss and I nursed him, feeding him with buck beef-tea, and looking in on him to cheer him up by turns. He had Rhodesian fever, I think, and I believed it was entirely because at Kafue River he had drunk whisky, beer, &c. Years ago, from observation, I suspected that three-quarters of the fever men and women get in hot climates is caused and aggravated by alcohol. Avoid that, and excessive smoking, and fever would soon be shaken off, leaving no ill effects and causing but few deaths. Until we arrived at the Duke of Westminster's farm and Kafue, the O'Flaherty had been in the pink of health. At those places he drank alcohol. Cecil and I didn't. The O'Flaherty got fever. We two did not.

Jack Banbury and Cecil went off on the third day after our arrival at Duiker Dale, to look for eland and kudu in the bush, and stopped away two days and nights, sleeping on the ground under the stars with fires to keep off lions. I felt very worried, for Mrs. Banbury told me that a large male lion was known to roam where they had gone, and had eaten a buck her son and husband had shot and left for the night some two weeks before. Mrs. Banbury was left with the Paying Guest—the only name we bothered to know him by—to protect her, and the Miss and I with the O'Flaherty. We visited each others' camps daily. Mr. Banbury, senior, had gone up to the Congo on business and would be away two weeks.

One night the Miss and I were sitting after dinner by our log fire talking in low tones not to disturb the O'Flaherty, who had been bad all day, and had now fallen asleep in his tent hard by.

It was such a lovely night! The air was perfect, and soft as velvet. The moon was full, and seem to hang for our especial use right over our dinner table, a golden globe from a dark purple ceiling painted with silver stars. The camp fire was a beauty that night. The carriers had piled whole trees on to it, and the great dry mossy trunks, full of gum and fragrant juices, roared and spluttered, and all the flying things of the beautiful Central African night floated and wheeled round the flames, moths, and beetles, and cockchafers, and winged ants, and many more.

The servants had all retired into their kitchen, a place some distance away under large trees, and which they had shut in with a wall of big stones for protection from lions at night. My bed had, as usual, been carried out and stood not far from us in its accustomed place on the grass. I was the only one of us sleeping outside, now the Soldier Man had gone away, and the Miss was always telling me, as did

Mrs. Banbury, that I should get carried off some fine night.

We were both sitting looking into the flaming logs and I was wondering where the absent ones bivouacked, and what they were doing, now this minute, when . . . A frightful earth-shaking *roar* broke from the wooded mountain rising immediately up behind us. The roar of a lion, close by. So close that we knew it must be within a very few yards.

We sat, rooted to our chairs for a moment. Then we started to our feet and made a rush for our tents. The O'Flaherty woke and yelled, "Coming!" and dashed out of his tent with his rifle. All the servants and carriers came running with large bits of lighted wood, and pluckily dashed about amongst the bushes and a little way up the mountain, waving their torches and making a noise that seemed as if it would scare away the Old Gentleman himself.

The Miss, in less time than it takes to describe, had laced up her Whymper and crawled in underneath, leaving a hole for her head to come through at the top, and out of this she looked, and watched the scene, occasionally remarking rather inconsequently, in loud tones, "Lord have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law." I got into my tent too, and laced it up and looked out.

After making as fine a show as they could, to impress the lion and convince him of how unwise he would be to press any more attentions on us, the servants were all on their way back to the kitchen, when . . . the earth again shook with the voice of our enemy, and all the noise and confusion broke out afresh.

It was all very unsatisfactory, for it was too dark to see or do anything.

"You surely won't sleep out after this?" cried the Miss to me, pointing to my bed, and I said, "No," and told the servants to bring my bed back into my tent.

"Six of you are to sleep near our tents too," ordered the O'Flaherty, "and keep up fires all night, and one man to do watchman."

So, for the first time on our travels, this was done, and I (my tent door open again), fell asleep, watching a tall black form wrapped in a blanket pacing silently up and down, up and down, past our tents and the fires, all night.

Deep sighs from the small Whymper of the Miss (who appeared to dislike lions even more than I do) betokened that she was probably reflecting upon her latter end, after an elaborate arrangement of buckets full of water inside each of her doors, all ready for the lion to fall into should he dare intrude.

My last thought was of the Soldier Man and Jack. Out in the open night, far away in the forest, sleeping on the ground, would they return to-morrow safe and unharmed?

CHAPTER XXXI

THE next morning Cecil and young Banbury returned, and found us examining with deep awe the pug-marks of a large lion close to our tents.

Out came "My Jottings," of course, and I felt really sorry for the Miss' mother, for it was plain her beloved child was piling it on thick, and to make it more realistic drew a rough sketch of the camp with several bushes crushed flat by the lion, close to the Miss' tent. As a matter of fact, Big Ben was made to sit upon the bushes, as the lion hadn't flattened them quite enough. It couldn't have been pleasant, as they were a mass of long white thorns as thick and long as darning needles, and indeed the natives sew skins with them, using tree-fibre as thread.

The Soldier Man and Jack Banbury had had a very disappointing shoot. Save one duiker they got nothing, though they saw lots of game. I went and sat outside Cecil's tent with him while he cleaned his rifle and gun and told me all about it.

They had slept in the forest and did not even have a fire, and several times they heard the roar of a lion.

The O'Flaherty wandered about near us in a dressing-gown, his gun on his shoulder, and if anything flew overhead he shot at it, and finally brought down some sand-grouse for lunch, and we called Jonas and told him to cook them in his usual way—over hot red embers on a spit made of sticks.

I will say for Jonas that he was a wondrous camp-cook for everything except bread.

In the afternoon we all slept, for no one had had a very good night, and at four we were having tea, preparatory to starting for a quest for korhaan on the plains below, when Jack Banbury and the Greek (whose wagon we had settled to hire) turned up, and we of course asked them to have tea with us.

It soon transpired that Jack Banbury was very worried. The Greek found he, after all, wanted his wagon at the date we had engaged it, and had come to offer us a small trolley instead, of no use at all to carry our things.

We all felt rather indignant. Here we had sat. "waiting for the wagon," as the old song has it, and now we had to find another, somehow! How or where, in these wilds, we could not tell.

Cecil was very cool to the Greek, and also told Jack Banbury that our offer to take him with us as guide was now "off." I was sorry for the boy, who was bitterly disappointed, of course, but the whole thing had been utterly ridiculous for people of our means, and a most unnecessary expense, and on the score of money I was relieved.

Where our transport was to come from no one knew, and we two talked it over during our korhaan shoot that evening. He and I went one way, The O'Flaherty and the Miss the other. We each brought home a splendid bag of korhaan, which seemed to abound here, and while working our way through the tall grass which covered the plain we settled that next morning Cecil should go back to Kafue River to see what he could get there, and the Miss and I should take my machila and trek to Mr. Ronald's farm, situated about twenty-five miles from our camp, and ask him could we have his wagon after all.

Early the next morning we had started, our Soldier Man

on his way to Kafue River and accompanied by three or four servants carrying his tent and bedding, and the Miss and I with another retinue were to be seen winding away over the plain in the opposite direction, while the O'Flaherty (whose heels were still sore and his existence at present spent in a dressing-gown "pottering") waved us farewell from our mountain plateau. I had left him some of my photographs to develop, and he intended to spend the day at it. I had my qualms, for though I was very grateful to the O'Flaherty for having taught me almost all I knew of photography, it's no use to disguise the fact that I had learnt almost entirely by his failures, not his successes. Already I could develop and fix photos much better than he could. Some of my most valuable and uncommon photos he had ruined. Being observant, I had soon seen where he went wrong, and learnt valuable wrinkles and lessons. His carelessness over the small details was appalling (as men's so often are) and many a photo went black, but of course one of his worst faults was in constantly forgetting, in his own airy way, to turn off the last film. By this time, however, I never let him take my photos, and before the Miss and I departed this day I threatened him with my dire displeasure if he spoilt any more of them.

"Don't you fret," said he, "I'm not such a fool as I look."

Which assurance, I told him, comforted me muchly.

Big Ben and three carriers were in for a heavy day at the O'Flaherty's hands. Every drop of our water had to be fetched from the limpid stream in which we had paddled and discussed Woman's Suffrage, far away upon the plains below. Already, as we wended our way in the direction of Mr. Ronald's farm, we could see, looking back, Big Ben in charge of three carriers bearing buckets and jugs for water for the photos, slung upon a pole, trotting across the plain towards the stream. As there were a lot of photos to develop, wash, and fix, they would be at it all day.

Soon the plateau and the camp were lost to sight. We had rounded the mountain rising sheer out of the plain upon which we were camped, and gradually our mountain grew blue and misty, and we found ourselves in entirely new country, dotted with glorious trees bursting into leaf and flower, the flowering trees of the far Rhodesias being something wonderful. One great specimen grew everywhere and was in full flower, but the young green leaves were only just sprouting. The flower, covering thickly every branch, was deep rich velvety scarlet, and upon picking branches we found them sticky with honey and the smell most fragrant. Bees in hundreds of course hummed round these trees. Another "honey tree" had balls of soft grey blossom flecked with mauve. Another closely resembled the Guelder-rose tree and was pure white. The blue plumbago and the red pomegranate also abounded. The feast of colour was wonderful, for these trees were mostly large forest giants, not mere shrubs. The ground beneath our feet was, now the spring was on, we found, simply a carpet of tiny blossoms of every colour of the rainbow. We were trekking through a garden! A veritable Garden of Eden before man or woman had trod it to spoil it—for all day we never met a soul. Nature had it all to herself, and her birds and beasts and winged insects alone possessed it.

Soon my machila was full of branches of flower, I lying smothered in it.

About 11 A.M. we found ourselves approaching a distant village, situate, like all kraals are in this great mysterious silent land, "dumped" down upon the plains all by itself in a condition of vast loneliness. These tribes of North-Western Rhodesia want mighty room and space to themselves. Unless the dusky inhabitants can stand at their hut doors and look round from horizon to horizon and see no other dwellings save their own patch, they would feel themselves crowded.

Said Hymn-Book respectfully, who had accompanied us, "The Beer Festivals in the kraals are beginning. Much dancing, much beer, much row."

Soon we became aware of it. A hideous noise filled the warm golden air ahead of us. Thrum, thrum. Tum, tum, dum dum. Ya ya! Wa wa! Ha ha! Yey——"

It sounded something like that, the *Yey* long-drawn-out like a hyena's cry, most weird and mournful, and so the whole tune sounded, and not in the least like a village jollification. More like a wake or a witch's scene in *Macbeth*. We arrived at the kraal and had to pass right through it. We stopped for the Miss to take a photo.

As a rule when we passed villages the inhabitants turned out to kneel and clap us, and the females and children to trill their fingers in their mouths *a la* penny whistle. But to-day the tribe was far too absorbed.

They sat on their haunches in a ring in an open space surrounded by huts. Most of them were half-drunk, and by the night-time would be entirely so. Gourds of vilely-smelling beer were passed round all the time, and each, even the naked babies, took a pull. Three or four savages sat and bumped at drums, and every one who had any voice left joined in the song, and in the centre of the ring a woman whirled and danced. She was, in her own estimation, the belle of the tribe. You could see that, in the "side" she gave herself, and the amorous and ardent glances she cast at the men. To us she was hideous. Clothed in gaudy rags and brass ornaments, she whirled and twirled without ceasing, brandishing over her head, now an axe, now a dirty saucepan, now a bunch of feathers, all these snatched from one or other of the men as she jigged round the circle.

A deep solemnity marked the proceedings. No one smiled. Where the pleasure came in, Heaven and they alone knew.

When the Miss had snapshotted the scene several times

(and contrary to custom no one seemed to mind a bit) we pushed on, and Hymn-Book, pointing to a low chain of pretty wooded hills ahead of us, announced that there was Ronald Baas' farm.

In about another hour we found ourselves passing through a prosperous little settlement well laid out with, now cotton-fields, now mealies, now pasturage and cows grazing on it, and we drew up about one o'clock noon, right at the doors of Mr. Ronald's own living caias made of plastered mud and poles and thatched roofs.

We had just arrived in time for lunch. Luckily Mr. Ronald and his brother Colonel Ronald were both there, partaking of a substantial meal in a cool dark parlour.

Much surprised, they came out, and we told them of our mission, and they cordially invited us to enter and share their repast. We had brought sandwiches in case they were absent from home, but these we now gave to Hymn-Book to share with his brethren, and I was helped out of my machila by handsome Colonel Ronald, while the Insular Miss was shown gallantly into the living-room by his equally good-looking brother.

Both lonely bachelors appeared overjoyed at the visit of white ladies to their settlement, and the best of everything was got out for us.

"Jim!" (to Mr. Ronald) "the guava jelly! It isn't finished?" (in an agonized stage-whisper from Colonel Ronald).

"Long ago, old chap. But where's the ginger?"

"You fool. You licked the pot clean a week ago. But, look here, there's shortbread left. So sorry, ladies. Our monthly stores from Bulawayo haven't yet come in. Are lying at Kafue."

"I have it!" yelled Colonel Ronald, "our honey! Tons of it! Found in the honey trees. Sixpence! the honey!"

"Are the honey trees the red ones? How lovely! All in the comb!" Sixpence deposited it with a bang on to the table, but first we began with cold saddle of oribi and young green lettuce and tomatoes, and ate at that till we could eat no more. They had a vegetable garden, and it was a treat to eat again such things as lettuce, tomatoes, beetroot, &c.

After lunch we sat in the cool shady veranda and talked out the wagon question, and Mr. Ronald agreed to let us have his wagon, oxen, driver and voorlooper, and I settled price and all (very stiff to our slender purse, though perhaps not so for these wilds), and then we had tea, arranged exactly which day the wagon should arrive at Duiker Dale, and about 3 P.M. the servants and machila were called and we started once more for our camp, and none too soon if we were to reach it before dark.

"Good-bye!" called our hosts to us, as my machila-men raised me and the machila to their shoulders, "but we shall meet again—at Dem River, your first stage to the Kafue Lakes. May we come and spend a day there with you and bring you green vegetables?"

"Come! vegetables or no vegetables!" was our response, and away I was swung, my bearers chanting the usual enlightening ditty, "Wo! kunda! Kurry na yo!" whereof the interpretation no white, or black, man had yet been found to give.

The trek back seemed simply endless.

The wonderful Insular Miss walked every inch of the way, about fifty miles in all that day. In vain I offered my machila. No.

After a time she vanished on her own (went after some korhaan) and it was pitch dark and the moon high and golden in the firmament, and our camp lights burning red on the hill and a camp-fire too to help guide us back, before she again joined me.

The next morning Cecil and his cortège were seen wending their return from the Kafue direction.

He had found no chance of a wagon there, so was very relieved at our having fixed up with Mr. Ronald.

The days at Duiker Dale passed all too quickly. Yet slowly. For we were all eager to be on trek once more, charming as existence was upon our beautiful mountain plateau.

Mrs. Banbury wept when she came to bid us farewell on the last evening. “The first white women I’ve seen since I alighted upon this benighted land,” sobbed she, as if she were a bird of passage taking a rest at Duiker Dale. “How shall I exist now? No one to talk to—at least, no women. Oh, I can’t stand it! I shall return to South Africa! It has been a happy, happy dream. Go away, you idiot, and don’t stand staring at me!” (to one of her servants, gazing horror-stricken at his missis’ tears).

“Now, now, mater,” said Jack Banbury, “you *know* you don’t mean that!”

“You’ll *never* go without Puff-puff!” said the Paying Guest, alluding to the Banbury Pomeranian, almost dearer to Mrs. Banbury’s heart than husband, son, or home.

“Oh, I forgot my Puff! I’d have to leave him behind because of rabies. No dogs allowed out of Rhodesia! That means (with a long glance round the wide landscape) that here I must live—and die.”

CHAPTER XXXII

WE left dear Duiker Dale about 11 A.M. of Tuesday, August 9, on a most perfect morning—though indeed all mornings, days, evenings, and nights are perfect during the winter months beyond the Zambesi.

Right through our trek the great blue tent of God's sky had arched above and around us, not even flecked with a cloud the size of a man's hand. And so it remained to the end. One forgot that such things existed in other less favoured climes as rain and mists, murky skies, thunder, lightning, hail, and snow. Here a great still "settledness," a wide blue and golden peace, prevailed, and seemed everlasting.

The early mornings and nights were still deliciously cold, permitting of the enjoyment of an enormous camp-fire at night, close to which our dinner-table was set, and even then behold us women muffled in blanket-coats and the men in ulsters ; while overhead the stars in their billions burnt like little hot fires, and the moon monthly grew and then shrank, and then grew fat and round and yellow again, but never disappeared as it does in England, so that I have known English children of five years old amazed to behold it for the first time ! In Africa, the Dutch and Colonial mother stares and laughs incredulously if you tell her that !

Our wagon arrived at the foot of our mountain about four in the afternoon on the eve of our new start, and Cecil and I went down to see it, passing the voorlooper on the little winding path, bearing upon his shoulders a large sack of

vegetables from Ronald Baas' farm and a note for me in a cleft-stick.

I read it as we descended the path, and Colonel and Mr. Ronald hoped we would enjoy the vegetables, and they would turn up to lunch with us at Dem River the day after to-morrow.

"After that," wrote Mr. Ronald, "you'll trek out of reach of us all—so it will be farewell."

We found the wagon at the bottom of the mountain, and the driver, his wife, and a fat baby comfortably installed against it, she cooking their evening meal.

The driver was a very old man: had been a transport rider of the early Rhodesias and had seen much of the pioneer life the other, and southern, side of the Zambesi; also had taken part in its raids and wars, and looked, as I have no doubt he was, a hoary old sinner. His wife was a child about seventeen and was in no sense a rebel, for she saw nothing incongruous in the union and was very submissive to her husband, poor little girl.

The rest of the daylight hours were spent by Cecil seeing the wagon (which had no hood) laden with everything we could spare that night from our camp, so as to lighten the task next morning. His own and the O'Flaherty's tents were packed on to it, as well as all our chop-boxes, personal luggage, &c., and that night he and the O'Flaherty slept in the open close to me.

We were all up and about by 4 A.M. I always believe that we had, throughout our trek, too many cooks at the broth. The swarms of carriers and servants it seemed to need to take down one tent! The dins, the quarrels, the yells, the confusion! Two or three, doing it quietly and alone, would have accomplished it in half the time.

At last, however, our plateau, our home since arriving here, was as we first found it, given up to silence and Nature.

The last load had been carried down the mountain. The

O'Flaherty and the Miss vanished down behind them, and the Soldier Man and I stood alone on the precipice edge and looked out over the fair scene below.

Quoted he, as he stood and looked out over the wide world before us, and the sun rising over the plain :

The stars are setting and the caravan

Starts for the dawn of Nothing. Oh, make haste !

* * * * *

In a few moments we had joined the others, and in half an hour we were winding away over the plains towards Dem River.

For a long while the Banbury household stood on their mountain-top and watched us, and now and then waved. That Mrs. Banbury shed tears I knew. I saw her son Jack's arm round her.

Then our safari plunged into some miles of tall grass, so high that it rose even above the heads of the Miss and me seated, as we were, atop of all our piled-up possessions. The men, on entering the grass-forest turned, waved to the black dots on the mountain-top, and fired off their guns twice in salute.

A moment after the reply came, two shots. And then we entered the grass sea, and all day our oxen mowed it down in their passage through.

We found wagon travelling much slower than carriers, and constantly our wheel would stick in some enormous hole impossible to see in the tangle, and then it would take the combined lungs of every one, and their legs and arms, to get us out again. If you stopped the Mashakalumbwe shouting and jabbering you'd get no work done at all.

We stopped at one o'clock for lunch, partaken of on the wagon, and in the middle of it a buck was reported in the grass, and the two men went after it, the servants beating

the grass and trying to surround it. But I, up on the wagon, saw it get away—a beautiful creature with lovely horns ; and though we now wanted venison badly, I couldn't feel properly sorry.

Endless did that day's trek to Dem River feel ! Now open plain, now bush, now grass, all in rotation.

The oxen hurried not themselves ; nor the driver. The voorlooper was the only one who worked hard. He appeared terrified of the driver, and ran up and down the line of oxen, exhausting himself in vain efforts to make the sleepy creatures move out of the slowest of crawls.

If we stuck in a hole, he got a sound hiding from the driver, who was often himself responsible. The voorlooper had evidently been in the Congo—he was so mutilated, poor thing.

The sun was setting crimson on the edge of the now purpling plain—a most beautiful sight—before Hymn-Book, standing high on our wagon, shouted “ Hië ! Hië ! Sweet water ! ”

We were nearing Dem River.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DEM RIVER ! The reader no doubt pictures a broad flow of water like the Rhine or the Thames.

Dem "River" in the rainy season may deserve its name to some extent, but when we arrived at a pretty running brook, clear and sweet enough, but so shallow that I jumped over it, I got a distinct shock. Inquiring of Cecil "when we would get to the river," he remarked, "you've just crossed it," and so it transpired.

Dem River had dwindled sadly. When the Ronalds arrived next day to lunch, they assured us, that in the rainy season you'd be drowned if you tried to cross it. It would seem incredible to the new-comer to Africa, but not to me, for in Basutoland one of our servants *was* drowned in a stream which the day before we had waded through.

The wagon remained on the high bank the other side of the stream, and we made our camp on the opposite banks, particularly well favoured for a camping-ground, for though close to the water, we were perched well above it on beautiful park-like land dotted with shady trees, beneath which (mine facing the little tranquil, silver stream) we pitched our four tents in convenient spots, not too close together.

Our mood about our tents changed in rather an amusing way from camp to camp. In bad lion country, a strong desire for each other's near vicinity became apparent. We could hardly get too close to each other ! Once on the Kafue Sahara we pitched the tents touching back to back,

we all felt so lonely and nervous. But in bush-country, where lions are never so dangerous, we grew very unsociable, and the appearance of our Dem River camp might have betokened the aloofness that follows a serious quarrel, and Colonel and Mr. Ronald burst out laughing the morning they arrived, and wanted to know "what the row had been about?"

"But! nothing!" said I, leading the way through trees to my own especial abode, attractively pitched almost on the edge of the steep ferny bank ending in the stream. "We're not so frightened of lions here. That's all. That's Cecil's tent down in that little dell. It make him quite a room, and he sleeps and shaves and bathes in the open, and none of us can see him. The Whymper is only for his clothes. That other little green Whymper over there, under the orange tree, that is the tent of the Insular Miss. Her door, you see, faces into the forest."

"And the O'Flaherty?"

"Oh, he's bang in the forest. Quite a bit of a way off. Myself I believe the driver's young wife is the attraction, for not far from him are located the driver and family in a thorn Boma. The driver seems very uneasy. I wish I could talk Mashakalumbwe. I believe I should preach woman's rights in every kraal we came to."

"Oh, this is lovely!" laughed Colonel Ronald, "a Suffragette in Central Africa! Where shall we escape them? Come and let us hear more of your views in the shade of that delightful dining-room of yours yonder."

So I led our two guests to a perfectly ideal parlour we had made under an enormous tree which threw so deep a shade that on the warmest day it was cool there. The sun now by day was comfortably warm, whereas a month and more ago we were glad of a jacket sitting full in it.

The Insular Miss was to be seen washing her head, away under the trees round her own tent, but she soon joined us,

her fair silky hair all wet and her face looking very fresh and jolly. She had a pleasant good-tempered face, had the Insular Miss. Hopelessly narrow views, and minds to match, necessarily implant their traces upon the human countenance. The women who cannot realize that women's aims and objects, and the cause they are at war for, are as sacred and important as any *casus belli* for which men have ever bled, are sadly lacking somewhere, and upon investigation you are apt to find either a fundamental selfishness, conscious or unconscious, or else a soul too small and cramped to be able to see beyond its own little orbit.

Just because of her open intelligent face full of good humour, I have big hopes of hearing one day that our anti "Miss" has suddenly "realized" things, and is making vigorous speeches from carts at street corners and on fine Sundays in Hyde Park.

To-day, however, she took up the cudgels against us, and we had great fun, sipping fragrant cups of Jonas's buck beef-tea, which, when in camp, I always have handed round with biscuits at eleven. When we are on the move our meals are so sketchy that we make up for it in camp in earnest.

The Soldier Man with Hymn-Book and two gun-bearers had gone a-hunting before daylight, and now servants came to say that carriers were wanted to repair to some distant spot where the Baas had slain two fine impala. This was good news, as we were very short of meat, and I sent off all the carriers with a pole and rope for the carriage of the buck.

An hour later the indefatigable Sportsman arrived radiant, hot, dirty, hungry, and when he'd had his bath in his own dell, he emerged clean and nice and gave us during lunch a description of as fine a morning's sport as he had yet had.

The Ronalds left us about 4 p.m., the afternoon having been



"THE SOLDIER MAN"

spent making us out a map to guide us in our coming travels. Wherever water would be, Mr. Ronald put a cross, but took care to add, "If it hasn't dried up."

The Kafue Lakes were our next objective, and an almost waterless wilderness led to them.

"But," said our friends, as they bade us a hearty farewell on the other side of the stream, "when you get there, you'll be glad. Game swarms."

"And lions," added the O'Flaherty, rubbing his hands with glee. "Golly! it makes one's mouth water!"

We all went a-hunting that same evening, all four of us different ways for a change, and each with a gun-bearer at our heels. I carried upon my shoulder my little B.S.A., but I fancy more for looks than use, for ever since the death of the beautiful white lesser egret on the Kafue Flats, that evening as the sun set, I felt I did wrong in slaying anything. Don't however expect to hear, oh stern moralists, that I killed nothing more during our travels. Like most of us, my good feelings and fine resolutions were, more than once, not forgotten but hastily thrust aside when the temptation became too strong! I am rather ashamed to say it—but there! it is the truth.

On this evening I felt beautifully well and happy, and walked along the banks of the stream with a light-hearted step, prepared, alas, to kill anything I could find! I've noticed that it's always when one doesn't feel well that one makes good resolutions.

Somehow it didn't seem so cruel to-day! A bird or two was badly wanted for the pot. Why shouldn't I get one if I could? At any rate that was no worse than every soul in London, for instance, pouring into the restaurants to devour partridge, grouse, snipe, lamb, beef, and veal. When we do that we are all murderers, together with those who shoot and kill them.

Thus I mused, consoling myself vastly, for if only there are enough people doing something all together, it seems to whitewash it wonderfully ! The coal-black sinner is the solitary sinner. If you're in good company you feel much better about it.

I began thinking things out on these lines, and had wandered a long way before I noticed that "Lang-Wan," the gun-bearer, who had certainly been in my wake when I left camp, and for some time after, had disappeared.

I stood still and called him, but no reply came.

What could it mean ? Had he lost me in the long, dense grass we had pushed through, or had he made tracks for the camp again and would justify himself later by some facile lie about sore feet or a sick stomach or some such excuse ? He was an ardent hunter, and had looked very ill-tempered at being told off that evening to follow me. There was always plenty shooting, plenty fun, plenty meat to be anticipated when he accompanied the Soldier Man or even the O'Flaherty. Even the "Blue-eyes Missis," as we found they had christened the Insular Lady, had a harder heart and a better knowledge of shooting than "the Dark-eyes Missis," which was me. "Dark-eyes Missis she cry, cry, if she kill anysings ! No fun in that kind hunting !" And so it had long ago come to pass that if I called for a gun-bearer to accompany me upon the chase, it was wonderful how every one of the lot was suddenly stricken with disease, except those who had got away when the first call came.

Well, Lang-Wan was gone, that was clear. And I was alone upon the vast Rhodesian Wilderness. I had left the river-bank a full half hour before, and could not even see it for miles of long grass round me. I was up to my eyes and over my head in one of the almost limitless grass oceans which abound in this part of Africa. I stood still and pondered. My feelings were not happy. Where was I ? Should I find

my way again back to the camp ? Suppose I was completely lost and night fell ! How horrid that would be !

The high grass, ten feet high, grew, as I said, thick all round me, and I had turned about so often in my perplexity that I now had no faintest idea which way we had come, where the camp lay, or how to bend my footsteps to get out of this.

Well, I mustn't lose my head. I would push on at random, hoping the grass forest would end, and I would find myself in the open, and perhaps discover some friendly ant-hill or tree up which I could climb to reconnoitre.

First, I stood still and called loud and long for "Lang-Wan ! Lang-Wan !" No reply came. Not a sound broke the great stillness round me, save the whispering of the long, dry grass stretching far above my head, and away into impenetrable thicknesses which caused my heart to sink into my shoes, for I knew there might be ten miles of it if I went the wrong way.

I must be at least two miles from camp. Should I have to spend the night out here in this lonely desert of grass, alone and terrified ? Of course they would come to find me, and then I thought, "Thank God I have my rifle loaded. I will reserve it till I am desperate, and then I'll fire off its single charge, to show what direction I'm in."

I pushed on, striving hard to master my uneasiness at the disturbing thought that every step I plunged, might well be taking me farther and farther from succour. Not once since we began our travels had I found myself alone in this lone land, anywhere. Never yet, for one moment, had I been out of reach and sound of voices and of help, should anything happen !

Horrid stories of people being lost in these wildernesses and never found more, assailed me, and I had to thrust them back with all the strength of my will. Oh for Cecil to

suddenly come into sight ! Oh for any one ! The Miss, the O'Flaherty, the faithless wicked Lang-Wan ! Had I even had dear little Jane with me ! But I had sent her with her former master, who wished to try and break her of her bad habit of chasing buck with mad barks, Jane's one annoying trait.

No, I was entirely alone, and I pushed on again and tried to keep myself in hand, and calm the thumping of my heart as the grass around me seemed endless as ever.

I made myself remember a saying that has no doubt helped many people and will help many more.

"Money lost, little lost. Honour lost, much lost. Pluck lost, all lost."

How this reflection helped me at the severe trial that now awaited me !

For, as I thus reasoned, pushing my way through the impenetrable grass, the thing I had dreaded happening to me more than anything else on our journeyings was here.

Through the long dry grass, a large male lion stood gazing at me. . . .

I stood still as he. All my blood appeared to rush to my head. I could not have stirred had I wished to. I stood still. I don't think I even breathed, or that my heart gave *one* beat for some seconds. Was I about to faint ? . . . No, I mustn't faint . . . I must stand quite, quite, still, and stare back. . . . It was perhaps my only chance. . . .

Moments like these become indelibly engraved on memory.

A brief weak little cry. . . . A sort of faint helpless cry of the heart passed from me. . . . A cry for courage. . . . Precious little had I got ! My small fluttering cry for courage, however, was not in vain. I felt new strength and nerve to become suddenly mine. I steadied myself and . . . was able to stand still, and look back at the dread form and face I had encountered.

It was, I should imagine, a very large lion. A very fine specimen. He was of rich tawny, glossy tint, and his magnificent mane was not torn and thin as is so often the case with lions in bush-country where the thorns and branches tear and spoil their beauty. This fellow probably dwelt in the big grass wildernesses. . . . He was a picture !

All this sounds as if the lion and I had a good long look of ten minutes or so at each other, but, of course, that was not so ; not of two seconds. One can observe much in a few flashes of time, especially if the tension be great. Almost as I started violently back on seeing him, and the great natural beauty of my foe was borne upon me, he saw me, and drew a step or two back himself.

I thought he was about to spring, but I took care not to move, mastering my terrible but fatal instinct to turn and run. Then he dropped his head . . . and with obvious fear, slunk quickly away ! It seemed at first too good to be really true. . . .

As he vanished, almost noiselessly, into the grassy thick-
nesses, breaking, as I could hear, into a sort of trot as he lost
sight of me, I could mark his progress distinctly for a short
way by the long, bending, swaying grass tops. . . .

My lion was fleeing from me just as fast as ever he could !

I waited a little longer. . . .

Then, I turned, and myself fled in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER XXXIV

It was the best thing, after all, that could have happened to me.

The encountering of that lion saved me, perhaps, from a dreary death in the grass wilderness, or, at the least, a night of terror and misery in its mazes.

For it turned out that my face had been set steadily from the camp when I received the check. Flying, as I now did, back in the other direction, brought me in a quarter of an hour or so to the end of the grass, and no words will properly convey my joy and relief as I suddenly plunged into the fair fresh open once more, and found also a friendly ant-hill, up which I swarmed in order to see the lay of the country.

I now was able to know, more or less, where I had got to. I had come a long way—*much* farther than I had thought.

To my right lay, right up to the horizon, grass, and only grass. Had I gone on in the same direction, what would my fate have been, with night rapidly falling ?

To my left lay, after another short expanse of grass, the river, and about three miles away again, the forest in which we were encamped, and which there stretched down to the river-bank.

Our tents I could see no signs of. The thick bush hid them. But now I knew how to direct my course I was happier, though I didn't at all enjoy the idea of another plunge into that hated long grass where, at this sunset hour, wild beasts might be roaming in search of buck, nor of the long, lonely

walk beside the river till our camp should be reached. The sun had set. The horizon was all a lovely crimson glow. The whole great plain lay bathed in colours beautiful and varied. There (spread out below me) lay the golden grass-sea, here pale gilt, there reddish copper, and then in patches it was almost purple, and then faintest pink ! The Rhodesian grasses are lovely to see ! Then came stretches, lasting for miles, of open veldt, away in the other direction. On these were seen groups of black dots—game feeding. These open spaces, growing thick in many places with flowers, added to the picture ; and the dark-green forests, here and there flecked with the splashes of scarlet, white, blue, and other flowering trees, lay along the river and away to one horizon, a sweep of greenness.

From that high ant-hill, however, I sincerely wished myself anywhere but in the farthest Rhodesias. The roar of Piccadilly ! How delightful and safe to be there, where to meet a lion would be impossible, and where one would be jostling one's fellow-creatures !

For a moment I contemplated firing off my one precious shot, hoping it might reach the ears of some one of our party. Then I decided to keep it till later on, when my absence should excite uneasiness. At present it would be wasted, for they would only think I was potting at bird or buck.

That traitor Lang-Wan (how I hated him for the misery he was causing me !) would, I felt sure, keep well away from the camp till darkness fell, for fear of questions. Possibly he was even now repenting and searching for me, or was thinking I had found the camp. Anyhow, only I could save myself, and the sooner I started on my walk the better, for in these latitudes the twilight is very brief.

So I descended my ant-hill, and once more (with something of a shiver) plunged into the grass.

* * * * *

It was 9 P.M., or thereabouts, before they found me.

I arrived at the river, but went dead lame when still two miles away and quite dark.

My terror of another lion was, I must confess it, extreme. I knew they always go to drink at night, and I kept glancing fearfully through the gloom, lit only by a very young moon, at the shining water of the stream to my right, expecting always to see a great form crouching, ready to spring upon me. Yet keep near the river I had to, it being my only landmark.

Several times I sat down and cried. I raised my voice and shouted more than once, but got the notion that a hungry lion or leopard would hear me and come along to see what it was.

So I stumbled on, and sat and rested my sore foot, and got up and went on again, and shivered and prayed at every rustle in the trees or the river-rushes.

Oh, that terrible night-walk in Central Africa! May no helpless woman ever have to face such again!

At last, seeing a crimson glare up in the sky overhead, I knew they were looking for me, and were burning large fires to guide me home. Now was the time to fire off my one shot, and I did so. Then I stood still and listened.

Thank God! Back came a rifle-shot! Then two more!

On I pressed, and in another half an hour I heard shouts, and, summoning all my strength, I called back "Coo—ee! Coo—ee!"

When finally Cecil (followed by servants carrying torches, and six carriers with my machila) burst through the forest shouting to me, I was too done up to run to meet him. I sat on a tree-trunk and just sobbed, and called out "Here!" and in another moment he was beside me. . . . And I tell you all, that was one of the best and happiest moments of my life.

You will wish to know, "What of Lang-Wan the traitor?"

Well, as I sank to sweet oblivion inside my tent, having been fed with beef-tea and toast by the two men and the Miss, and having disjointedly related my adventures, I felt a distinct, if unchristian, sense of satisfaction at hearing Master Lang-Wan howling (as he hopped around, rubbing that portion of his anatomy which should never be turned to the enemy) "Aie—ee! aie—ee! Me no do it again!"

CHAPTER XXXV

WE had meant to start for the Kafue Lakes early the next morning, but my adventure made it impossible. I felt too ill and unnerved, so we remained at Dem River another two days ; and with my bed under the trees, waited on by my companions (especially the Miss, who proved the kindest of nurses), I revived, and by the evening of the second day was quite fit again and as anxious as any one to be off.

So the wagon was laden up overnight with everything we could do without, and we were all up and dressed before the stars were snuffed out of the sky. Breakfast at seven by a huge fire being over, we bustled up the whole retinue to such good purpose that we were "on the road" (as we would describe it in England, where roads are) by eight.

We could not hope to reach the lakes in one day, but we had to make for a grove of cocoanut palm-trees on a far distant bare plain, and Mr. Ronald had told us to be sure and reach the palm-trees, for only there would water be found.

All the morning we crawled towards our distant goal. The wagon and oxen were fearfully slow ! We were in wildest, loneliest wilderness. No kraal or sign of human far or near ! All such we were now leaving behind completely. This indeed seemed the Edge of Beyond. That title, given to a book dealing with life somewhere within a drive of Salisbury in Rhodesia, began to appear to us as *very* inappropriate. If that was the Edge of Beyond, what had even Livingstone

been to us ? From there to benighted Magoy (where our trek began) was a long cry into the real wilderness. And now we all look back at even little solitary Magoy as civilization left behind months ago. As for Salisbury and Bulawayo, that would be almost like going back to London.

We trekked all the morning, halting for lunch while the wagon was being dug out of a big hole one wheel had got into. The noise and quarrelling were terrific, but we had got more or less used to that, and sat serene amidst it, up on top of our possessions, devouring cold saddle of oribi, bread-and-cheese, and other viands from the weekly chop-box. A little way off sat Jonas in front of a grass fire, kept rapidly fed by his kitchen "slaves," two imps of about eight years old who have somehow got attached to our cortège. Jonas boiled the kettle for tea and abused the two imps, who never stopped running with dry grass, torn from a patch hard by. We had seen the last of wood for a time to come. Out here on this limitless plain not a shrub the size of a teacup met the gaze. It was wonderful how Jonas would cook at all. But they do. Neither would there, of course, be any shade from this time forth till we struck bush-country again. And it was now daily growing warmer, though not yet unpleasantly so.

Our retinue (we observed to each other, as we sat having our tiffin that day) was swelling perceptibly as we journeyed ! Every servant seemed to pick up a "slave" (varying in age from eight to eighty) at the villages we passed. The slave did all the work. The servant "rowed" him and beat him. We never grasped *why* the slaves were content with this one-sided arrangement, or what the system of fear was which terrorized the wretched creatures into thus going into bondage. We paid them nothing, and they appeared in real abject fear of their self-constituted masters.

Big Ben's slave was *much* older than himself : might have been Big Ben's father or grandfather—perhaps was. Big

Ben was nineteen years of age, and the skinny bundle of rags who, about a month ago, had suddenly appeared as his fag, must have been quite sixty. We never knew where, or at what period, we picked these creatures up, and when (as now and then happened) they suddenly vanished, we uneasily wondered *where* had the poor being gone to? We had perhaps been journeying far from kraals or humans, and yet—some slave disappeared! His owner, questioned, had always some story. "He went back to his village . . . oh, a week ago . . ." and—and we had not missed him.

"Queer!" the O'Flaherty said on one of these occasions. "Do they murder 'em and shove 'em into an ant-bear-hole and say nothing? Very likely."

"Oh, Mr. O'Flaherty!" cried the Miss on that occasion, "how terrible! But . . . how interesting and primitive."

And out came "My Jottings" from her tent, and the item was duly recorded: "Corpses in ant-bear-holes."

It may have been very interesting and primitive (for every one but the victim), but the Soldier Man and I agreed that if it occurred again a row must be made and strict investigation; and the retinue had been duly informed that if another slave, or any soul, left our service without permission, "the pollis" would be sent for.

"The pollis" being no nearer now than Livingstone, about four months' march distant, no one looked too impressed.

Alas! in this great mysterious land of unwritten tragedies and unknown spaces, human life becomes of small import! So much, in the way of vanishments, can be safely put down to the lions, and to the dying of thirst and hunger through losing your way. It would be next door to impossible to bring home to its perpetrator any crime of this sort.

After lunch the two men and the Insular Miss all said they would go ahead of the wagon different ways to see what could be got in the way of buck or bird for the pot. I was

sleepy, not having yet quite recovered from my late adventure. So I laid me down in a soft, comfortable place that they made for me amongst the tent-bundles on the wagon ; and enjoining the driver and servants to remain with the wagon and take care of me, and to steer for the oasis of palms and water (still a long way off), my three companions departed, shouldering their rifles and followed by a gun-bearer apiece. And I fell asleep.

I was aware in my sleep that we had started moving again, and I must have slept about two hours when suddenly a fearful lurch of the wagon and excited yells woke me ; I was almost thrown off my resting-place, and found that we had gone clean into a deep, vast bog—oxen, wagon, and all—and were immersed over our axles, while the sixteen oxen struggled wildly, sinking deeper at every plunge. I sat up and rubbed my eyes.

Here was a pretty state of affairs.

We were well into the depths of one of the enormous morasses which are such a feature of these open plains. Sheer carelessness was the cause. Relying upon my being asleep, and the others absent, both driver, voorlooper, and in fact the whole retinue, must have been engaged in some interesting debate, leaving the oxen to choose their own way. The wagon must have been left to proceed well ahead by itself, for there behind, upon the edge of the bog, danced our excited retainers, every one urging some one else to go in to the rescue—the hubbub simply begging description.

At first not a soul would venture, and I had the vastly uncomfortable feeling that the wagon, oxen, and I, might rapidly vanish into the depths alone, and be seen no more.

At last squash into the bog was hurled the wretched voorlooper, driven forward by assegais thrust into the small of his back ; and he floundered to the wagon somehow, and climbed up the half-sunken wheel and yelled at the oxen,

who, the whole sixteen of them, now breathed hard, preparatory to fresh efforts—poor things.

I got on to the very top of everything to see if I could summon the others to the rescue. I couldn't even see them! Dots were visible, but might have been buck or anything. The plain was so vast that without field glasses one was almost helpless. How unfortunate I was! Straight from one adventure into another! I yelled as loud as I could, "Hi! We're in a bog!" but a penny-whistle in a storm would have been as effective.

At first I had really feared that the oxen and I might be drowned. I had heard pleasant tales of these morasses and how some are veritable quicksands, engulfing all that goes into them. But now I saw that we had stopped sinking and would go no deeper. But it was quite bad enough, for we were well up to our axles, and how we were to get out Heaven alone knew.

I called imperatively to the driver and others on the bog-banks to come and at least see what could be done, and one by one they plunged in, and soon the sight was unique. Every one in up to their waists running with slime—some hauling at the oxen, who were now plunging wildly once more, and the rest shoving at the wheels behind. Before we could hope to get out, the oxen had to be got with their heads towards the bank behind us, for the way we were now pointing led into some two or three miles more of morass, probably growing deeper and more dangerous at every step.

For a solid hour our plight remained unchanged, and I got so tired and worried I could have cried. The mosquitoes swarmed and bit me dreadfully. They rose up off the slimy surface of the bog in myriads, and as they never bite the native the whole lot went for me, and I sat and fought them, and now and then climbed up again to see if any signs of my companions were visible. The afternoon also was closing,

and any hope of reaching our oasis of palms by night-time seemed remote. The sun was very hot and I was frantically thirsty, and there was not one drop of water, a carrier having run his assegai by mistake into our canvas water-bag (carried upon the back of some slave, who had to be prodded onwards or else he kept falling back), and all our precious water had run out. This particular accident was always occurring, and we began to wonder had the water been drunk and the hole made as an excuse.

At last Big Ben, mounting the wagon—his person a mass of running ooze, of course, (pleasant for our bedding)—announced, “Mastah on ant-hill see us in bog, and he coming quick now.”

In about half an hour the others arrived.

The O’Flaherty plunged straight in, and, getting on to the front board of the wagon, urged the oxen to fresh efforts by twisting their poor tails till I simply couldn’t stand it any longer and called him a cruel brute, and a brief but heated altercation ensued. The Miss sat on the bog-edge and said she would get blackwater fever, as her hands were thick with mosquitoes, “the dangerous kind that stand on their heads.”

“Let ’em stand on their heads *or* their tails,” called the O’Flaherty, pouring with perspiration and slime. “Will some of you come and help bite the oxen’s tails? No worse than you’ve often done before, Britannia dear!—when you’ve eaten ox-tail soup, you know! Come!”

Cecil had gone with the carriers and Hymn-Book to try and find something solid and dry to place in the bog under the oxen’s feet, but he soon came back. Not a bush or a twig or a stone to be found.

“Only one thing for it,” said he at last, “we can’t be here all night. The wagon must be unladen and the oxen can then, perhaps, move it.”

This was done, and took another hour. Half our possessions

got dropped in, one or two small things vanishing altogether. I was carried across by carriers making a sedan-chair of their hands.

It was sunset before, at last, after herculean efforts, our wagon and oxen emerged from that bog, and by the time it was loaded up again, darkness was rapidly falling upon the scene.

CHAPTER XXXVI

It was not at all a cheerful outlook. Here we all were, about thirty souls, stranded on a desert, not one drop of water between us, night already fallen, and bad lion country.

The poor oxen seemed simply worn out with their two hours' frantic struggling in the bog, and so, when we had trekked along under the moon for about another hour, hoping we might strike the Oasis of Palms, and finally realized that we were "lost," Cecil called a halt, and "confabbed" with Hymn-Book, who offered to go with two or three carriers (who have a kind of faculty of "smelling" water which we don't possess), and see if he could find any of the precious fluid, near which we might camp after all.

So the wagon stopped and the oxen were taken out, and down dropped the poor creatures, too tired even to roam and feed! Jane sat huddled up against me on the ground, her little red tongue lolling out. Jonas and Big Ben made a fire of grass and the slaves kept it fed "to keep off lions, and guide Hymn-Book back." It all reminded us very much of our similar experience on the Kafue Sahara. Only now, the nights were much warmer than then, and we consequently felt our now raging thirst much more.

"The only thing that will relieve me," said the O'Flaherty, after chewing his fingers and adopting other devices he had read of in connection with shipwrecked mariners and others, and finding but small relief, "is to go and give a sound hiding

to the fellow whose assegai made a hole in the water-bag. Here ! Where is the brute ? ”

And he lurched into the gloom beyond the fire, and finding that the culprit had wisely gone with Hymn-Book, he seized another carrier at random, and it was evident that *that* carrier had also done *something* (as yet unsuspected), for he howled he would never do it again and “ would return it instanter to the Baas,” and limping to his bundle he produced the O’Flaherty’s hunting-knife, missed now for some days.

“ There ! Now you see ! ” said the O’Flaherty, showing the result of his correction to Cecil by the light of the fire, “ don’t I always tell you how invaluable periodical beatings are with these people ? You may take my word for it, if you adopted the policy of giving one good hiding per day to each carrier in turn, you’d only be getting back your own then.”

And really, so it appeared.

Two dismal hours passed, and then we heard far-off shouts, and saw burning grass being waved about upon the blackness of the plain. Hymn-Book was returning and soon appeared, very “ done,” and said, “ Yes, he had found water, and would we follow him ? ” The oxen were inspanned, and the Miss and I climbed up on it, and listened to Hymn-Book’s description to Cecil, as we moved along, of the kind of camp we might next expect.

“ No the Palms, mastah. That long way off. This place I discover, very much bad place. Once, village there, but too many man-eating lion all round ; so peoples say, ‘ We no live here any more. Too many lions eating us and our piccanins,’ and they leave the village, and nobody ever live there again. Ten years ago they leave it. Must say plenty prayers to-night. Bad, *bad* place.”

“ This is cheerful,” said the O’Flaherty, “ but Lor’ bless you ” (to us and our scared moon-lit faces), “ it’ll be all the same a hundred years hence. And it doesn’t really hurt much

to be eaten by lions. One pat of his paw, I've been reliably informed, is like a sledge-hammer and knocks you senseless."

"Shut up, O'Flaherty," murmured Cecil-Baas, "it's quite bad enough. Cheer up, Ethel!" (smiling up at me), "it will be really quite safe. We men won't go to bed at all, so you two can sleep as calmly as if you were safely snug in a London flat."

"Oh, Mama," murmured the Miss to the absent parent at Muddlethorpe-on-Sea, "if you could see me now. Oh, to be safe in a flat—*anywhere*."

And I was inclined to agree also that we'd been "flats" to come.

On we crawled, and plunged now into long grass, and it must have been nearly midnight when we arrived at the "Deserted Village" of this wilderness of all wildernesses! The wagon stopped.

"Here we are," said the Soldier Man, cheerily.

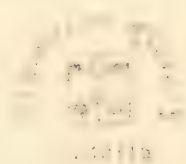
The moon lit up the scene, desolate beyond imagining.

Picture a vast moon-lit plain of grass, with a small island, as it were, cleared in the middle, long in shape, the ground very slightly raised above the rest, and upon it still stood the remains of what had once been the village.

Some of the frail grass and mud huts had years ago fallen to pieces and lay in ruined heaps. But a few, better built, I suppose, than the rest, still stood up. One of these had been the abode of the chief or induna, said Hymn-Book, for it stood inside a high palisade of stakes and thatch, and he suggested that the Insular Miss and I slept in it to-night, to save putting up tents.

We both refused.

"You remember," said I, peering in at the low door, "how we were warned never to sleep inside native huts because of that animal that burrows under your toe-nails?"



"Burrows under your toe-nails?" moaned the Miss, peering over our shoulders.

"Hullo!" we heard the O'Flaherty exclaiming, as he explored around outside, "I don't wonder they cleared out of this! Come, all of you, and look here!"

Out we trooped, and gathering round the O'Flaherty, we bent, and peered at an ominous-looking white heap which he stirred up with a stick, fishing out, on the end of it, various cheerful-looking objects, such as, first, a human skull, then the body (the ribs quite intact), and then another skull, a child's; and so on. Then some long tangled hair—a woman's.

"Oh dear me!" again murmured the Miss.

"That'll do, O'Flaherty," said Cecil, "come and let's see where we will locate ourselves. It's not a nice spot, I confess. But we'll get out of it first thing to-morrow."

Hymn-Book here came up with water in a jug, and we all drank eagerly. It tasted very nasty and slimy, and was got from another bog adjacent to this village.

"The driver and his wife and baby can have the Induna's hut, Hymn-Book," said I; "I prefer to sleep in the open."

"What are these queer little conical-shaped towers?" inquired the Miss, gazing disconsolately around in the moonlight, and indicating some funny little erections on short poles made of grass and apparently stuffed full of something.

"Those," said our major-domo, "is grain-towers—full of good ripe grain."

"Is that so?" said Cecil, "then break one open, Hymn-Book, and give the carriers grain from it."

But Hymn-Book cast the whites of his eyes moonwards and shook his head.

"Mastah! In each grain tower is little lump poison. Nobody can tell where. If we eat we swell up and die. And

Mastah ! The man what it belong to, his father and grandfather's ghosts taking care all the time of their dear son's grain in case he some day come back to fetch. If we touch, the ghosts will kill us somehow."

"Come away," groaned the Miss, and once more invoked the old lady who lay peacefully asleep, let us trust, at Muddletorpe-on-Sea, fifteen thousand odd miles away.

Meanwhile our servants had hauled down off the wagon our camp dining-table, chairs and beds, &c. And had also lit our large standing camp-lantern. Big Ben was quickly laying the table, which he had placed on the short green grass at the far end of the "island," and at the other end Jonas had located his kitchen, and had got a large grass fire, and was preparing us a hurried meal and hot tea. The rapid way Jonas got meals ready for us after arrival in camps was deserving of praise. He never lost a minute.

We decided to put up no tents. We would leave this unpleasant spot the first thing in the morning. So our beds were set out on the grass, and the stars as canopy. The whole scene looked strangely lonely and weird, in its setting of "wide world" around ; the little desert island in its ocean of tall whispering grass ; the moon overhead and the stars, which to-night looked *so* far away, so completely part of another world !

Our meal over, the two men decided that they would keep awake with loaded rifles, and being quite worn out, the Miss and I lay down upon our beds, having merely exchanged dresses for dressing-gowns. The men's couches were close to ours, and they drew up a table, placed the camp-lantern on it, laid their rifles where they could be seized in a moment, and lighting up their beloved meerschaums, they sat themselves down each on their bed beside the table, and engaged in conversation, chiefly, as far as I could gather, upon whose meerschaum was colouring best.

Soon the whole camp was quiet, and I lay looking up at the stars, and then out from my bed over the miles and miles of grass, where now and then the terrified whistle of a reed-buck pursued by goodness knows what, reached us through its thicknesses, and I wondered, might not even now a great lion be crouching in it, close to the foot of my bed ?

And pondering thus, I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I again opened my eyes, and instead of finding, as I had expected, all preparations going on for an early start for the Lakes, now only a day's journey distant, I saw (as I sat up to drink the tea Big Ben had placed between my and the Insular Miss's bed on a table) that the wagon was being unladen, not laden,

"What can it mean ?" said the Miss, sitting up in bed and stirring her cup and sipping, "surely we are not going to stop here in this horrible place ?"

The Soldier Man and the O'Flaherty were at the other end of the island, superintending various articles being lifted off the wagon.

Now that daylight had come, and we sat in our beds and looked around, we could see better what an extraordinarily isolated and desolate spot this was. Why any village should ever have been dumped down in the centre of such a desert was a mystery. Yet, in the lovely African morning, with the grass sea glistening with dew-drops, flights of wild birds passing over our heads, and here and there in the distance a pair of graceful horns showing above where the grass grew shorter than the rest (denoting how plentiful the game was), we confessed that when robbed of its night-alarms, the deserted village of this desert was not devoid of some charm and fascination.

Apparently the two men had come to the same conclusion. Seeing us awake they left the wagon and came up to share our *chota-hazaree*.

"Aren't we leaving this to-day?" we inquired, and Cecil replied, eating bread-and-butter :

"Well—we want to ask you—shall we stop till to-morrow? Hymn-Book says it's a marvellous place for game. In fact, you can see that. The pool near, in this dry country, attracts the animals, and, as you know, I want roan horns badly. A large herd of roan were feeding an hour ago in that open space three miles away. But you shall decide."

"What about the lions?" asked the Miss, "they must be very plentiful too."

"Well, not one came near us last night. We never laid down. There wasn't a sound."

"Yes," said I, "let's stop. I rather like it now. It's only one more night."

So it was settled. All our fears and terrors had sped with the friendly white day!

It was perhaps a pity that it was so.

The Miss had her Whympier put up, but my large white tent took such a long time to pitch, that I said I'd sleep in the open again, and the day passed quite happily.

The two men got splendid sport, and Cecil secured an almost record roan head. The O'Flaherty killed several reed-buck which really almost swarmed here, and he wounded a beautiful lechwe which, however, got away into the grass and he could not find it.

I spent my day writing letters (when they would get posted no one knew) and developing photos, and once more night was upon us, and with its return, returned, alas! all our horror and uneasiness of this spot.

As darkness closed in, we all became silent and less cheerful. Was the Deserted Village haunted nightly by spirits and their memories of ghastly tragedies which hovered around? It must surely be so, our own spirits became so oppressed, and the same was to be observed amongst the servants and

carriers. No choruses and songs round the camp fire ! No gay chatter and friendly argument ! There was only grass to burn, and when our dinner was over, all the fires burnt themselves down, and our little island looked drear and lone indeed !

The moon would not rise for hours yet. The stars burnt like little fires, but oh, a long, long way off ! Now and then a shooting star crossed the dark sky.

"I wish we had not stopped here," said I to Cecil, strolling with him after dinner up and down the island, "we must be sure and burn our large lantern to-night."

We called Big Ben and told him to fill it again before he went to bed, and he then informed us that the tin of paraffin had got overturned and there was no more oil !

This was serious news. In such bad lion country, a light or fire of some kind was really necessary. Now all night we should be in darkness complete, to say nothing of future nights.

"To-morrow," said Cecil, "I'll send two carriers to the Ronalds' farm and ask for oil. They'll be away six days at least, and will have to join us at the Lakes. Till then——" and he shrugged his shoulders.

There being nothing whatever to do sitting up, we all "retired" early.

The Miss laced herself very tight into her Whymper. I wished my tent had after all been put up ! But my bed was carried close to Cecil's, and on the other side of me slept the O'Flaherty, the three of us under the stars. The two men placed loaded rifles all ready against their beds. Jane crept, very depressed, up to my bed, and laid down on an impala skin on the grass, so close that I could pat her.

Oh ! But it was desolate and dark !

I knelt and said my prayers beside my bed. As on all occasions when I am afraid, sad, or very happy, I felt the

near presence of the child I have “lost”—yet never lost. I looked up to the stars, and asked, as I often do, that he should be my “guide and guard” through the night to come.

I saw Cecil, in the very faint light that the stars shed upon the scene, sitting also on the side of his bed, his head bent upon one hand.

Then I got into bed and lay down, and after some time I slept.

The moon had not yet risen when—and this is no fancy—a voice, a child’s voice, called me in my ear, thus :

“Mother, Mother. Wake up. There is danger.”

I awoke and sat up.

It was *intensely* dark now. Much darker than it had been earlier in the night. I simply could not see even the Whymper tent or the two beds either side of me. All was still as death. The whole camp seemed asleep. I sat up, listening intently. I didn’t like to wake any one to tell them that a Voice had warned me of danger. They would say I had dreamt it. I hoped to hear some other sound, on account of which I could awake them. *But no other sound of any kind greeted my ears.*

I sat like this about twenty minutes and then I lay down again, and after some time I again slept.

Once more the childish voice spoke, as it were, deep down into my ear, “*Mother, Mother, awake. There is danger.*”

I sat up again. All was dark and silent as before. But this time, as I sat there in my bed, my hearing very acute, *I distinctly made out a creeping sound, as of some large heavy animal, in the long dry grass which almost touched our beds.* First, it crept ; then, oh, I was sure of it ! *it crouched.*

At that moment, Jane, starting to her feet, gave a low ominous growl. This finished me. I shrieked aloud, “Cecil ! Cecil !” And he woke. Also the O’Flaherty, loudly demanding through the inky blackness what was “up.”

"I am sure," said I, sitting, listening, yet hearing nothing further, "that a lion is close by, somewhere, waiting to attack us. I heard it creeping."

"Now, Ethe," said Cecil in soothing but very sleepy tones, "what nonsense! You've just been dreaming. Or else it was a buck!"

"Buck *don't creep*," said I, "and when they hear a sound, they don't stop short *and crouch*. They bolt. This animal sounded very big and heavy in the grass, and when Jane growled, it stopped dead short, and oh, I *know* it is a lion, and is crouching there now, listening to us."

"And winking to himself," said the O'Flaherty, "cunning old devil! Come, come, go to sleep, Mrs. Suff.! We're as safe as a church."

"I assure you, Ethe," said Cecil, stifling a huge yawn, as I could hear, in the darkness, "if it was a lion, he is far enough away by now. Go to sleep and make your mind easy."

And both men lay down with sleepy grunts. The poor fellows hadn't slept at all the previous night.

But oh, it was easier said than done to "go to sleep and make my mind easy"! The timidity of women! Their peculiar intuition! That something, never to be acquired, which is woman's very own birthright, flung to her, yes, by man, like a bone to a dog, and only imperfectly comprehended by man, and so deemed a thing of questionable value! Often disposed of in three contemptuous words—"women's silly fancies!"

How often, in the history of things and lives, have "women's silly fancies" saved themselves and others from dire disaster? The dream that stopped you going upon the railway journey which ended in destruction, the nameless dread that made you change your ship, the premonition that assailed you over some beloved child far away, a "fancy" laughed at by its male parent, but weighing heavy on the

heart of the mother ! Oh, men, who think you can run nations and things alone, be well advised, and take into your counsels the other half of that nation's brain, wit, soul, and spirit ! Without it you *must* blunder. *She* often scents danger, when it is, to you, invisible !

I laid me down again—but not to sleep. Of the Voice that had woken me, I had said nothing. Who, of those of our party, save perhaps Cecil, would ever understand ? But I would keep awake, and nothing should induce me to sleep again to-night.

So the moments passed. For a while, all was silent. . . . *Then, once more, I heard the creeping in the grass.* . . .

I sat up in the inky blackness, and at that same instant, *Jane rushed under my bed*, and two huge dim forms passed my bed, and a swing of a great tail all but knocked over my little three-ply wood table, set out with tea-things for the morning.

“Cecil !” I shrieked. . . .

And then . . . there was a horrible roar, and a crashing sound, and the sixteen oxen, fastened, lying down, to the wagon-pole, rose up in one wild and terrified stampede. . . .

“Lions ! Lions !” yelled the servants and carriers, and in a moment the whole camp was awake.

CHAPTER XXXVII

“GET into the Whymper!” shouted Cecil to me, “I order you, Ethe! Get into the Whymper tent at once!”

But no one was going to order me now. I had warned—and in vain. I only wanted to be in the crush. And I rushed to where the whole scene was now illuminated by the flaming, flaring bunches of dry grass waved wildly about by the carriers and servants, who, with unearthly cries, leapt hither and thither, throwing light on to the surroundings, and revealing the terrified oxen, fastened to the wagon pole, plunging to get rid of it, while the wagon, still piled with our possessions, rocked like a ship at sea.

Their terror, poor, dumb creatures, was so great, that we knew that the lions had sprung at them, but must have, in the intense darkness, sprung short and then made off, frightened by the general uproar.

It was a scene never to be forgotten, our lonely little green island now!

For suddenly, the flaming torches, being waved about, ignited what remained of the Deserted Village.

First one hut caught fire and roared up. Then the next one. Then the next. Then all. Then the tall, dense, dry grass jungle that surrounded us on all sides, caught fire one side too, and the great flames, licking heavenwards, ran over the plain, and the huts blazed and crackled, and a new and horrible danger faced us—that of being burnt alive. In a very few moments, as may be imagined, we were, on our

tiny peninsula, almost surrounded by a vast blazing furnace of flames.

The heat was terrific. Our hair frizzled. Our skin tingled. As for our possessions and Mr. Ronald's poor oxen, it seemed as if nothing could save them. There wasn't a drop of water to throw on the flames. Cecil shouted to the carriers and servants to try and beat the flames out with sticks, and he and the O'Flaherty and the Miss and I tugged and dragged to get the terrified and almost unmanageable oxen away from the flames, but over and over again we were driven back by the heat. Several chop-boxes, precious to us in this shopless, Never-Never land, were burnt up with all their contents. One of my sheets was singed, so close came the flames to my bed, and the ropes of the Whymper were burnt, gave way, and down came the tent flat, adding to the general confusion.

The driver's baby and wife inside the induna's rush-pallisaded hut were all but roasted alive, and were only just awoken and got out in time.

In fifteen minutes every hut was ashes, many valuable things were burnt too, and the fire, which had now got complete hold of the grass, was roaring away, up to the dark sky, all over the Plain on one side, a wondrous, but awful sight in that inky night scene !

We were safe at last. Half a mile of red and smoking stubble stretched round us, a red-hot lake of small leaping flames, hissing still. The village lay low for ever. Accursed spot ! Three little grain-towers alone had escaped, and stood up, half charred, and looked even more sinister than before. As the panic subsided, and the servants and carriers gathered round us, as if for comfort, every one had some tale to tell and every one talked at once.

Jonas knelt and kissed my feet, weeping with joy that I had not been eaten, and related with childish *naïveté*, how

he had actually seen the lions (two large males) making for my bed, round which, as further irrefutable evidence, we also found their fresh footmarks."

"But it was too dark to see any sings, Jonas," I objected, "and if you did see, how could you be so wicked as to keep still and let me perhaps be 'skoffed' (eaten)?"

"Missis!" cried Jonas, clasping two thin, black, supplicating hands, "we black mans can see in dark like the cats and the lions. I no sleep. I too fliten (frightened). I think 'plenty lion here,' and so I sit up in dark, near where kitchen fire been burning, because ground warm there. And I sit and look up at God in sky, and tell God 'poor Jonas no converted Christian yet, like Hymn-Book, who is quite ready go Heaven'"—here Hymn-Book scratched himself, not at all sure whether to be pleased or not—"and so I ask God in Big Sky to let lion eat Hymn-Book, but *not* poor Jonas, what is only ready for Hell, and tell plenty lies et ectra! And so, Missis, and Mastah, God he hear me, and lion he no come near me; but little time after that, I hear funny sound in grass, and I sit and listen with mine two ears all quick, and I see two great lion going to Missis's bed. And at that sight, *my hair walked*."

"More to the purpose if *you'd* walked," said the O'Flaherty, "and warned us all. Ugh! you coward!"

"No, Mastah! I *not* that! I sit and keep quiet, 'cos I no want be eaten till I ready to go Heaven. That very good thought. Holy thought. No like go Hell."

"Most convenient! Ugh! You beauty!"

"No, Mastah, I *not* that! And so," continued Saint Jonas, "I sit quiet and see two big yellow lion walk past Missis's bed, and I say, 'Missis no ready for Heaven either.' And next minute lions jump on cows" (oxen).

"Well," said I, "I must say I'm glad I *wasn't* ready for Heaven if that's what kept the lions off me."

“ I really mustn't omit to enter all this into ‘ My Jottings ’ to-morrow,” said the Miss, “ though I fear it will rather shock poor darling Mamma who has never travelled or enlarged her mind, and as for Jonas, she would give him up entirely. But aren't you all ready for bed again ? Will some one help me to get up my tent with a bit of string or rope ? ”

Some one did this and the Miss retired into it and seemed quite able to sleep.

But we others sat up and talked in low voices till faint opal lights appeared upon the eastern horizon.

Then the sky became pearl-coloured, and then pink, and when the God of Day appeared (a narrow rose-coloured disc against the black curve of the world), we felt safer, and being fairly worn out, as was the whole camp, we lay us down and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WE found that the "Deserted Village" and the Kafue Lakes were not so far distant from each other as we had imagined.

We slept late, but were off again by twelve noon, and thankful beyond words to quit the camp where such almost tragic happenings had occurred.

The wagon for miles traversed the scene of the late grass fire, and I think we all felt pretty bad when we came upon a beautiful buck (the letchwe) wounded the previous day by the O'Flaherty and half burnt to a cinder. He had in the evening pursued but lost it in the grass, and the painful thought was, that it had lain there helpless and been unable to rise and get away when it saw the flames approaching.

I am sure this is by far the saddest and cruellest part of sport, the wounded animals who get away and die a lingering death somewhere alone.

"Let's hope it was already dead," said the O'Flaherty, and we called to the driver to start the oxen again.

It was not a pleasant journey through those miles of black ash. Up it flew into our faces, and being burnt fresh and soft, we emerged from it rather blacker than usual, and a nice sight we all looked. As for our belongings on the wagon, and the oxen, and the "retinuc," well, we might have all come newly out of Dante's Inferno.

As soon as we got out of the burnt region, we found ourselves on a large open green plain, rather swampy and squashy,

but that we forgave at once, for the reason was apparent. There, only about three miles distant, lay the Kafue Lakes ! A chain of glittering silver waters, joined, as it were, by little green islands, the prettiest sight we had seen since our first camp upon the Zambesi.

They lay low down, and so only now broke upon our view.

A long cheer of joy went up, and Hymn-Book's usual cry of "Aie ! Aie ! Sweet water !" sounded lovely ! And for once appeared to be true.

We made now straight for the largest of the lakes, which lay in front of us. Every one was chattering and talking. It was such a delightful change, this lake-land, after the eternal plain, grass, and forest.

Far out upon the Rhodesian Wilderness it lies, this fair oasis of the limitless desert ! No human, nor sight nor sound of human is to be seen. It all looked so unexplored and unknown, that I quoted the "Ancient Mariner," as I stood up on the wagon and looked at it lying shining ahead of us, my eyes shaded by my hand :

*We were the first
That ever burst
Into that Silent Sea.*

It was plain, said the men, that the sport at the lakes would be wonderful, for distinctly could we see how the banks round the lake for which we were bound, swarmed with colonies of wild-fowl, and as we got nearer and nearer, we could hear the screaming of them as they quarrelled and flapped up and down on the banks. The lake was about a mile across to the opposite banks, and rippled softly, blue as a turquoise, and we all declared that we would have "mixed bathing" in it next day. The Miss and I would find some garments we could bathe in, and so would the two men, and what glorious fun it would be !

We were now about two miles away, and the wagon went so slowly that Cecil said he thought he would go on with Hymn-Book and a gun-bearer and select a good spot for our camp, so as to save time, shooting anything en route that might supply us with a dinner.

"May I come too?" asked the Miss, and it was decided they should go on, and then wave to us where to steer the wagon, and off they trudged, leaving the O'Flaherty and me seated atop of our possessions, and every one in the highest of spirits.

The O'Flaherty and I sat and conversed on divers subjects, such as religion, socialism, humanitarianism, the Suffrage, and Home Rule, and over the latter, being Irish, he became so excited that the servants looked most alarmed and thought we were quarrelling. And so absorbed were we that we quite forgot to follow the progress of the Soldier Man and the Miss over the plain.

When we did remember them, and stood up to look for them, to our surprise not one sign of them was to be seen far or near.

Once more how much we wished we had field glasses! You would think on these great open plains you could easily see everything, but it is nothing of the sort. The distances swallow objects up, and you cannot always say, even if dark specks are to be seen, what they are.

In vain we gazed around, right away up to the lakes. No sign nor sound of them!

"Well, this is a rum go," said my companion, and I, of course, declared that a lion must have dispatched them, for after the previous night's experiences, it was plain there were plenty of that gentry about, but, of course, the O'Flaherty laughed loud at that, and said, "No such luck."

"Don't be a brute," said I, "it's no laughing matter. Something *must* have happened."



LUNCHEON EN ROUTE TO LAKES



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STALKING GAME AT JUNGLE RIVER

"Well, all we can do is to push on to the lake banks," said the O'Flaherty. "They may have gone after game."

This seemed more than likely.

If we were at Heaven's gates and Cecil saw horns he wanted, he'd go after them, even if they belonged to the Old Gentleman, hoofs, tail, and all.

It was, however, really rather too bad if he had gone a-hunting when it was now quite 3 P.M. and our camp-pitch not reached, nor decided upon, nor anything! At this rate it would be dark before we were settled down.

However, we pushed on, and in about an hour found ourselves on the banks of the largest lake, disturbing, as we came up, large flocks of birds of all kinds, whose home it was, and who probably had never seen man nor woman before.

It was a beautiful sight that stretched before us, but all as quiet and lonely as any desert island!

Where could the others have got to? What on earth did it all mean?

After another long look round, off the top of the wagon, we decided that as we had arrived at a very pretty spot and the ground carpeted with the very finest softest green turf I ever remember to have seen in Africa, we couldn't do better than decide upon it for our camp. The turf was half moss, and its vivid greenness was, of course, due to the near vicinity of the lake. It felt beautiful under the feet, soft, springy, and fresh. Yelling to the driver and servants to unload the wagon here, the O'Flaherty asked me to choose the site for my tent, and we walked round inspecting.

"As close to the water as possible," said I, "I want to hear the tiny waves lapping up all night into my dreams."

"They may lap up a croc, not into your dreams, but into your tent," said he, in his usual romantic fashion. "Take my advice—not *too* close."

"Oh, do you think there are crocodiles in the lake?"

I asked, looking out over the serene water, ruffled only now and then by the dip of a cotton-teal's wing in its swift wheel around, while close to us, blue dragon-flies hovered against the water, and a fringe of crimson and pink water-lilies edged the green shore.

"Tons of 'em. If we bathe we'll have to be jolly careful. Well, shall we pitch your tent here? As close as this?"

"Yes, I'll risk it. I am sure crocodiles *don't* walk into people's tents. That was a nightmare you had on the Zambesi River."

"All right. Then I'll risk it, too. Pitch my tent here, Big Ben," pointing to a spot about twenty yards from mine, "and we'll put the Soldier Man's Whymper 'long here, on a line with ours, and the Miss's maiden slumbers will be guarded well if we wedge her in just here. Now, boys! Bustle up and set to!"

With much jabbering the job began, and in an incredibly short time my tent was up, and when my one trunk had been placed down outside it, I unpacked my things, for somehow I knew we were going to be here on the lakes some length of time. I never troubled to unpack for one or two "night-stands."

Big Ben, who was my own special boy, made my bed and arranged my camp-furniture, and spread my leopard and tiger-cat, and silver-fox and jackal skins (daily trophies of our life now) over the floor and on the chairs. I hung two pretty chintz curtains over the opening into my bath-room, and then looped them back with ribbon, and two carriers went into the lake and filled my green canvas bath. They also brought me an armful of pink and crimson water-lilies and their beautiful leaves, and I arranged these in a big blue bowl on my table. My tent had a veranda, and its inside was lined with large roomy pockets which easily held the scanty wardrobe we each had to do with, so very soon it all looked

charming, and calculated to make anyone fall in love with tent life straight away.

The O'Flaherty looked in and murmured, "Golly ! Women *are* nailers at comfort ! Come and look at *my* tent ! It looks awful compared to yours. I wonder what the reason is ?"

We repaired to his abode, and it certainly was a contrast. His bed was a bundle of Jaeger blankets ; no sheets at all, and no pillow cases, only two extremely greasy looking, grimy pillows, apparently one mass of hair oil, mingled with strange odours of tobacco, and, of course, there were holes burnt in half the things from his cigarettes. He really had almost as many little comforts as I had, but it all looked more like a Chinese doss-house (as viewed once by me on the Rand Mines) than anything else I've seen, and all men's tents seem much the same.

"Oh dear !" I said. "Let me pull it about for you. I can't give you sheets or pillow-cases, as I haven't any clean, but I'll do what I can with a boy, a broom, a duster, and some common-sense and water-lilies thrown in."

And ordering the O'Flaherty to go and look after the arranging of our camp dining-room, I set to work, and in twenty minutes you'd barely have known the place.

"The worst of it is," said he, "I shall be afraid to move for fear of spoiling it all. But, Lor' ! It does make a diff. !"

"Of course a woman makes a diff. anywhere," I rejoined, "I always laugh when men, abusing the 'Suffs.,' as you call them, write letters to the papers saying how superfluous women are in creation, and how nicely they'd get on without them. Heaven save the home, hotel, restaurant, boarding-house, camp, or any abode where no woman is ! Rapidly would they, and do they, become pig-styes, left to *your* dear sex. Why, it took a carrier ten minutes just now to scrub your tent floor. What the stuff all over it was, I don't know, but it was dark brown and looked horrid."

"Must have been my tea gone cold in the morning. I usually empty the cup on to the floor."

"And now," said I, "come with me to the wagon and let's climb up and see if we can see the others. I am getting so anxious."

Which we did, and I can never describe how my heart sank as, far or near, no sign of them was visible. What could it mean? Even the exuberant O'Flaherty looked grave and pronounced it a "rum start."

The camp was up, Cecil's and the Miss's tent all tidy and comfortable, the dinner-table laid out, the kettle boiling for tea, and the day fast passing away into the night. Surely they had come to grief in some way?

"Come at least and have some tea," said my companion, "and then we'll decide what to do."

We sat another half hour and then I started from my chair.

"I'm going to look for them. Please call carriers and have two water-bags filled."

"But I'm coming too. Cheer up. He's gone after game and forgotten the time."

We were bustling around getting ready for a start (what a life this was! Always something disturbing!), when Big Ben, who had mounted the wagon for something he wanted, called out excitedly, "Mastah! Missis! Quick must go away there, 'cos other Baas and lady and Hymn-Book all stuck in big bog together and calling us."

Up the wagon we quickly swarmed, as may be imagined, and truly enough, beheld the absentees literally almost up to their necks in a bog which lay about a mile away between us and a green island to the north of the lake; and now everything at once became clear.

As I had anticipated, Cecil's mania for sport was the cause of it all. He must have seen something he wanted in the way of game on the island, and gone after it, and the Miss had

followed, and they had all got immersed in another of the charming morasses which had been such a prominent feature of our travels up to date.

Of course they only looked specks, but the Soldier Man was waving a handkerchief tied to his rifle, and the Miss’s white sun-umbrella also heaved up and down, either as a second signal or in her efforts to extricate herself, impossible from here to say which.

It was an alarming sight, for as we knew, some of these bogs were of quicksand consistency and sucked you down. Oh, how could they have been so mad ? Also, what could we do to save them without being sucked in ourselves ? Thus inquired the O’Flaherty, announcing, as we all started with ropes and poles to run to their aid, that though he was jolly sorry for them, he wasn’t tired of life yet, and other remarks which only made me long to box his ears.

“ Oh, shut up and let’s only get to them ! I don’t care whether you’re tired of life or not, you’ve got to help get them out, and if we can’t, we’ll all drown together.”

The expression of the O’Flaherty’s face at this dictum would have made me laugh if I’d not been so troubled. It was a look of the most acute and distressing anxiety.

He knew that into the bog he’d have to go, if I had to take him by the scruff of the neck, and though he had nothing of the coward in him, the idea that he didn’t “ cotton ” to was—I quote from his later remarks—“ drowning in black mud, just in order to keep the others company.”

So long as there was any use, or hope for them, he didn’t mind, but it was apparently my determination that “ drown together ” we all would, and that appeared to him as very unnecessary ; so he was much worried.

However, it never came off.

Before we reached the bog edge, they had got a “ move on ” again, and having found a place not so deep as the

rest, they were now slowly wading towards us and safety.

As they landed, we all involuntarily receded, for no language will describe their appearance, and the appalling odour of the black slime encasing them.

The Miss fell upon the grass, breathing the word, "Water!" They had, it transpired, gone after a fine puku on the island. It was the first specimen of puku Cecil had ever seen. He recognized it only by pictures, and to expect him to resist it was to expect the impossible. He advised the Miss not to accompany him, but in vain.

They never reached the island. They had got into the bog about noon, the hottest hour. It was now 5 P.M. Their sufferings from thirst alone (to say naught of mosquitoes and the stench and the discomfort and anxiety) could be imagined when one looked at them extended upon the earth. We had to give them water carefully, or tried to, but the Soldier Man seized one water-bag and put its lip to his mouth, and though I pulled at it, it was no use, he half emptied it. And the Miss! She and the O'Flaherty had a similar tussle, which ended in him rolling over on to his back (the Miss had a fine muscle, well developed from years of hockey, golf, and dumb-bells) and by the time he got up again, she had also made her water-bag look very foolish.

We gave them a long rest on the grass and then we returned slowly to camp.

It needed real heroism to walk at the Soldier Man's side (the ill-smelling slime of, I suppose, centuries, dropping off him), and to nobly restrain all signs of distress, and even at last to take his arm, and let the slime run over me too!

CHAPTER XXXIX

I SHA'N'T forget my feelings when, four days after the experiences recorded in the last chapter, Cecil announced (after long treks with Hymn-Book round and round the lake) that "get to that island and kill that puku he *must*," and that, as there was no other way there than through that hateful, dangerous bog, he meant to "try it again, and guaranteed he'd get through it this time."

I sat and stared horror-struck at him.

We were all at lunch. We had been fishing all the morning from the banks and had caught several large barbel, and were now eating one. It had a queer taste, but it's wonderful how having caught or killed a thing yourself makes it go down, and as every one pronounced it "delicious" and no one cared to be the first to say it was "horrid," we "pegged away" at it and finished it.

The fishing had been great fun, in spite of the O'Flaherty having all but been nipped in two by a crocodile while wading out into the lake with our lines and floats. A monster head and jaws suddenly appeared close to him (he was in about four feet of water), and with a loud yell he made for the shore, and after that sent Big Ben out to do the job, that sable youth first arming himself with a hatchet and giving a sort of last dying look at the world as he entered the water.

At night disturbing sounds from the lake kept us all awake. A kind of "crocodiles' cinderella" seemed to be going on,

to judge by the pirouettes and then heavy splashes ; and the way the water was now and then furiously lashed, as if by an indignant tail, might have betokened some ball-room tragedy, such as an indignant husband's remonstrances with a wife who had half filled her programme with one name, or a rebellious daughter-crocodile eloping with the mate of her choice while papa was at supper.

Weird sounds from the plain also greeted our ears each night as darkness fell upon the lonely land.

We had no wood for fires, save a tiny blaze from a few treasured twigs collected by day by the carriers miles away, and when the nightly allowance was burnt out, we had to sit in darkness, enlivened now and then (a great extravagance) by *one* candle on the table, and round this we gathered close for comfort. It wasn't at all cold. In fact, it was now growing warmer every day, and so we didn't suffer that way. It was to cheer our souls we pressed round our penny dip, and talked and watched it gutter down, and our very souls needed cheering when, through the vast night, a howling of some big animal in abject fear, pursued by something else big, would sweep past our camp in the inky blackness, literally a few yards from our table.

Two carriers had been sent to Kafue River for lamp oil, but till it arrived (if ever we saw them again) candles were all we had.

It was, by day, a happy life on the lakes, a glorious life—the realization of most of my childish dreams, for nothing more like a desert-island story can be imagined. We bathed (*very* close to the shore), we sat in a row and fished, we went to seek and kill bird or buck for food, we held “sweet communion together,” as the O’Flaherty called it, quarrelling over which were the best all round, men or women, and discussing each our own ideas of religion and life in general.

Cecil read me Lawrence Hope's poems in my tent-veranda,

and I learned by heart the lovely one—“ The Lute-Player,” beginning :

*No others sing as thou hast sung,
O Best-beloved, to me——*

And we also had our Omar Khayyám, and it seemed to fit the place and the scene when his musical voice and the sight of the great sunburnt plain around us blent together :

*Here, with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,
A flask of wine, a book of verse—and thou
Beside me, singing in the wilderness——*

I certainly never believed it possible that anyone could ever again want to brave the bog that had given us all such a fright, yet here Cecil was saying he intended to.

“ That island,” said he, “ swarms with game of all kinds. And I must try and get that puku I saw. He was such a fine fellow. I dream about him.”

In vain I remonstrated that day at lunch, but I saw it was quite useless, so I said no more ; and when the morning came that he was to start, I emerged about seven o’clock from my tent all ready in my short trek skirt and tobacco-felt hat, and my camera slung over my shoulder.

“ Why, Ethe ! ” said he, meeting me, “ what’s this ? Where are you off to ? ”

Said I, “ I am coming with you.”

“ Coming with me ? Where ? ”

“ To your island—over the bog. You didn’t think I’d let you go alone ? ”

“ Look here, Ethe,” said he, “ this is unheard of. You are *not* coming.”

“ I *am* coming,” I replied, “ if *you* go ! You are going to-day, aren’t you ? ”

“ Well, yes, I meant to. But I won’t take you.”

"I don't want you to take me. I'm going to take myself."

"Ethe, be reasonable. Come and sit down here. Breakfast isn't ready yet."

So down we sat, and for the first time our warrior found that I had a will as strong as his own, once my mind was made up.

To each fresh remonstrance I replied doggedly, "I am coming too."

He tried being angry. He tried treating it as a joke. Nothing was any use.

"*I am coming too.* It will be all right, I expect. Hymn-Book says that he has found a better way to go, not quite so deep."

"What am I to do with such a rebel as you, Ethe?" said he.

"You can't do anything. I'm coming."

At last he said, "Well, come! You'll soon turn back! And then Hymn-Book can bring you back. You can't stand mosquitoes, nor smells, *nor* water-rats."

If he hoped to frighten me he didn't succeed, and then we had a long tussle because he said "on second thoughts he wouldn't go at all."

"You'd better," said I, "to take care of me. *I'm* going."

So at last he got up and said, "So be it. We'll go. There's no real danger. But I warn you, the going is *awful*."

"Let's get to breakfast and tell the others. Perhaps they'd like to come too."

However, they evinced no such desire. On the contrary, they were planning a day to themselves in a little native canoe made of skins which the O'Flaherty had actually found rotting away in the tall reeds near our camp, and he had spent a whole day repairing it with buckskins, and declared now that "it was fairly watertight."

"Britannia and I are going in it a-fishing," said he, "with



OUR CANOE OF SKINS ON THE KAFUE LAKES

the net ; a-fishing for a croc. If you send a croc skin to the Army and Navy Stores at home they make you a fitted dressing-bag of it—free of charge. So that's our plan to-day."

"Oh, very well. Don't get drowned," said Cecil.

"I was born with a caul," said the O'Flaherty ; "were you, Britannia ?"

"Was I what ?"

"Born with a caul ?"

"I can't remember. At least, I mean, I never heard. How absurd you are, Mr. O'Flaherty !"

"Why not let us paddle you to your island in our canoe ?" suggested he of the caul. "Better than that d—— bog—excuse the expression, ladies."

"No, thank you," replies Cecil, "I've been inspecting your canoe, O'Flaherty. It may last *about* half an hour on the water. So take my earnest advice and don't go anywhere out of your depth. A ducking won't hurt you and you're safe to get it ; and don't forget the crocodiles."

So, breakfast over, we wave farewell and set off—the Soldier Man, myself, Hymn-Book, four carriers, Milk the gun-bearer, and Big Ben, who bears upon his head our luncheon-basket, packed with cold korhaan shot the evening before, biscuits, butter, jam, and drinks.

How clear the air is here ! How voices sound ! When we are quite a long way off and approaching the dreaded bog, we distinctly hear the O'Flaherty telling the Miss that "life at Muddlethorpe-on-Sea is apparently most cramping to the soul," and the Miss confessing that she never was quite sure she *had* a soul till now—in wide Central Africa. Oh, mercy me ! The Miss's mind is enlarging—but what on earth will "darling mamma" say ?

* * * * *

The passage over the "Devil's Bog," as I had christened it, was an experience not to be forgotten. At the very first

step we all sank in to our knees, and as we proceeded, each time the cane gave way, and we went under, it grew deeper, till at last the entire party would disappear to their waists, wade along a short way, parting the thick, black, burnt cane till one came to a patch not so badly burnt and more likely to bear, and then we struggled again on to it and plunged heavily onwards. Under the growth, the slime, mud, and filthy ooze of years engulfed us ; vile creatures, which only live in noisome spots like this one, such as water-rats, snakes, newts, &c., were, as had been predicted, plentiful, dwelling as they did in the horrible stagnant lake-water beneath the cane. Once, at the edge of where the thick growth ended and clear lake began, we saw a large crocodile lying on the cane and sunning itself asleep. The especial horror of the whole thing lay in the uncertainty of the depths below us. We were virtually crossing the lake upon the frailest and rottenest of bridges. It evidently grew deeper as we proceeded. The next step might land us in bog over our heads.

Over and over again we nearly turned back, but Hymn-Book preceded us and seemed fairly confident, albeit going very warily and sending again in front, as an extra precaution, an almost naked carrier whose life was of no value to anyone but himself. This being, carried a long pole and thrust it into the bog to gauge its depths, and so we persevered, egged on by the sight of the island of our desire, apparently alive with water-fowl, and buck also feeding here and there plainly.

Long before we reached its safe emerald-green shores we were indeed a sight to behold, running, the lot of us, with black ooze and water up to our very necks, for the thick canes, when not burnt, were as a network of ropes which caught your feet, and face foremost you went into it all over and over again.

The stench of the rotting lake beneath us was awful, and

I felt it would be a mercy if we were not all down next day with blackwater fever, that thing that often kills in a few short hours.

It must have been ten o'clock before we landed, drenched and slime-covered, upon the island. It had taken us three hours to cross the bog, and my heart sank as I remembered that there was no other possible way of getting back to camp that night than by the same route.

This prospect bid fair to spoil all my pleasure for the day, but the moment we landed our eyes were regaled with so many wonderful sights and animals that all else was banished save joy and wonder. For here we were upon a veritable desert island, more of the kind depicted in glowing colours in the story-books for children than one expected to find in real life ! We stood, our little party, pouring with water, a sorry sight enough, and, like shipwrecked mariners might have done, we gazed around us.

A more beautiful and interesting spot it would be hard to conceive. Probably no soul had ever been here before. It seemed like it, for it was a small zoological garden, and none of the birds or animals seemed even interested in us.

On the banks which bordered the clear part of the lake (our camp the other side looked very small and far away) were congregated hundreds of water-fowl of many different kinds, screaming, flapping, flying, and feeding. There were geese, duck, teal, and others of which we knew not the names. The banks were white with them, with blue-grey patches for the duck and teal. A little inland on the island were strings of lovely pools literally covered with water-lilies, white, blue, pink, purple and crimson, lying on their large flat leaves, some asleep, some awake and open. I never knew before we came to these lakes that the water-lily could be anything but white.

Round these pools, standing solemnly upon one huge,

bright-blue leg, dozed, or cogitated, here and there, monster white birds like marabout storks; their heads and bills, scarlet in hue, were as large and long as themselves, and they really looked more like some creatures in a fairy fable. How they ever flew, with bills as thick as a tree-trunk, reaching some feet long down to the ground, I could not think. Now and then they opened these, and made a grab at some fish or snake hiding amidst the water-lilies. They never moved as we approached them.

The turf on the island was smooth, short and green, as on an English lawn. We sank down delightedly on it. Already our clothes were drying in the hot sun, and, calling the servants, a tablecloth was soon spread before us on the grass and we lunched, for our breakfast had been at 7.30 and we felt very hungry and thirsty. As we ate, talked, and admired everything, other animals were seen at a distance. A good long way off a small herd of some sort of antelope feeding was plainly visible. Cecil thought they were his longed-for puku, and as he had, so far, got no puku horns at all, he was in great excitement to be off after them. Two large hares bounded past us, not very far off, and there was distinct and recent spoor of a leopard, and some very large kind of buck.

Hymn-Book declared there was buffalo spoor right down by the lake, but pronounced it a week old.

When he had swallowed some lunch, and felt rested and dry, Cecil asked me did I mind being left with the servants while he went after the puku? On his assurance that he would be back in plenty of time to get over the bog in broad daylight, I begged him, of course, to go. I was too tired to accompany him myself, and he departed with Hymn-Book and Milk.

I sat and watched him for a long time stalking the puku, who seemed at first quite unconscious of his approach. At

last some rising ground hid him, and the servants reported from an ant-hill that the buck had taken alarm and were off. I heard his shots about twenty minutes later, and Big Ben told me he had killed one buck and was running after another badly wounded. Then he disappeared altogether . . . and I, stretched out on the warm, dry grass, fell asleep. My head was aching and I felt stiff and strange.

The servants sat near by, having a meal themselves, and, except for their quiet voices, a great restful silence fell over us—and I slumbered thankfully.

It was about two o'clock when Cecil turned up again, radiant. Two fine puku heads were carried by Hymn-Book and Milk, and to fetch the meat we would send carriers over the bog next day. I sat up and shook off the aching feeling on me, and the very effort did me good.

"Now I've got my puku," said Cecil, sitting beside me on the grass, "we'll try for some birds. Hymn-Book! My shot-gun!"

At that moment a huge spur-winged goose sailed slowly over our heads.

He looked so grand and calm against the blue of the sky that when "Bang!" went Cecil's gun, and he flopped down almost at our feet, I felt dreadfully sorry. He was a magnificent specimen and had sharp spurs on his wings. After that, followed great excitement and running about and crawling on all fours, and when it was time to be making for camp our bag was as follows: my own little rifle was responsible for two duck, and the rest were shot by my companion. Two puku, one spur-winged goose, one ordinary goose, three duck, five teal, two sand-grouse, one hare. Also—the luncheon-basket crammed with water-lilies.

The journey back, over the bog, with darkness fast coming on, was even more awful than in the morning. We had started far too late. My sufferings were great, for again I was feeling

ill, and this time I simply could not shake it off, for I was sickening for the sharp attack of fever that followed and lasted days. I don't know at all how I did it. Long before we were out of the bog the quick night that falls in these latitudes was full upon us, and in addition to the difficulty of going at all, and the stench and now deadly cold water into which we sank at every few steps, we could not see a yard before our faces, and our great dread was that we should, any minute, find ourselves sinking in the open depths of the crocodile-infested lake. I felt almost too ill to lift a limb!

When, nearly three hours later, after what was one of the nightmares of my life, we heard shouts and saw lanterns swinging, and knew that the O'Flaherty had come with servants to meet us, I just breathed "Thank God!"—and meant it. The last half-mile over the dry plain Cecil and the O'Flaherty carried me, making a chair of their hands.

CHAPTER XL

I WAS very ill after that. High fever attacked me. I became delirious and too ill even to be moved. My one dread was that I might die in this desolate, man-forgotten spot and be buried on the lake shores, to be later scratched up by lions. My cry was, "Take me away from here!"

My companions nursed me devotedly. The Insular Miss was so kind, but much distressed because I wouldn't take a drop of medicine of any sort. The O'Flaherty kept coming to the tent-door to tell me to "cheer up, and you'll be dancing a hornpipe to-morrow," and "Lor', bless your soul! you couldn't die if you tried!" and other jovial assurances which I tried to believe, but as I always saw him wink at the Miss when he thought I couldn't see (as much as to say, "We must keep her heart up") I decided I must be rather bad.

Cecil gave up shooting altogether, so as to remain near me, and he would sit in the shade of the veranda of my tent and sometimes (when I got better) he read to me. Owing to its weight, we had had to leave our box of books behind at Livingstone, and so now all we possessed in literature were some old paper novels and some tracts, picked up at the farm of a missionary, with cheery titles, such as "Thoughts on Hell and am I going there?" and also a book thoughtfully bestowed on us by the good missionary, called "Hervey's Meditations amongst the Tombs." These, with "Lawrence Hope," "Omar Khayyám," a very ancient "Pink 'Un" and half a "Queen" had been handed round and perused till they

hardly held together (the "Pink 'Un" came from another farm, *not* the missionary's), and the Soldier Man ministered to my mind from these somewhat opposite specimens of literature, and reported to me in the intervals what was going on upon the lake, which seemed to have tides, and sometimes lapped up almost to the door of my tent.

"The O'Flaherty and the Miss are off in the canoe to fish. . . . The Miss looks so pretty to-day. . . . She has put quite a nice patch on his khaki 'shorts' where he tore the seat. . . . It's a bit of her own green tent-flap. . . . He has been doctoring the servants to-day. Had a lot of odd half empty-bottles of medicine, and remarking 'Waste not want not!' sat the carriers down in a row and poured it down their throats whether they had anything the matter with them or not. One carrier is in great pain and it seems he got a corn-solvent by mistake. . . . I wish, Etke, I were in that canoe just now . . . a big crocodile is following them. . . . The O'Flaherty stands up to get a shot at it. . . . Dear me, the canoe has upset! They are all in the water, but only up to their necks. . . . Yes, the Miss is shrieking, and the O'Flaherty (dear, dear me! how foolish!) is chasing Hymn-Book through the water to kick him (he appears to have caused the upset), and in the meantime the canoe is drifting away and the croc may be coming up again any minute. . . . Now," adds the speaker in a pained voice, "where is the sense of chasing a servant in the middle of a lake full of crocodile?"

With these diversions the days passed, the fever abated, and only a weakness remained to trouble me. I got better at last, but we had run out of grain for our servants and *they* were now getting ill (with the unusual meat-diet), and it had been found necessary while I was ill to send the wagon, driver, and voorlooper away to find some kraal where perchance grain might be purchased in the large quantities necessary for so many hungry mouths. It had taken a hundred and

twenty-five pounds of grain daily to feed our fifty carriers before we let them go, and got this wagon to travel by. Now the number was only about fifteen, but even that meant a lot of grain, and, as we were a long distance from any village likely to have enough to sell, Heaven only knew when we should see our vehicle again !

So we had to stop on the lakes and possess our souls in patience, often scanning the horizon for the smallest black speck that might be the wagon returning. But no wagon came !

The days fled quickly, and I was soon well enough again to accompany one or other, or both, of the sportsmen on the evening chase, after the air got cool.

One beautiful evening I was out on the great plain with Cecil, Hymn-Book and the gun-bearers. We had had a glorious evening, stalking a beautiful herd of zebra which fed two miles away, and we had to get near them by a big detour, the last mile crawling or walking, bent almost double, through grass not high enough to cover us. The natives consider zebra meat a great delicacy and a change of diet was becoming necessary if they were to keep well and contented.

We got close to the herd at last, and then the men had to wriggle across open ground to reach an ant-hill from which to fire at them. I felt so sorry for the beautiful animals, and but for wanting them as food I would gladly have foregone their skins, they looked such a picture !

At the first shot the whole herd stampeded, all except one, which fell dead at once. We marked the spot so that it could be found again when we sent carriers for it (which would have to be the same night or lions would take it), and now, as the sun was setting, it was well-nigh time to be getting back to camp, fully six miles away. There would be a moon later on, but I hated being far out in this lion country after dark, and so we hurried up all we knew.

We were filing along through long grass in single file when Cecil in front stopped dead short, and crouching down signed to me and Hymn-Book to get up to him. We all did so, and found that the grass had ended and a mile or two of open plain lay before us, and upon it moved something . . . something too near the ground to be a buck . . . something yellow in colour, swinging a great tail as it moved.

"What is it?" I whispered, and he replied; "Don't be frightened . . . but . . . yes, it's a lion."

"He comes this way, mastah!" panted Hymn-Book in extreme terror, and I must confess that it was not a pleasant sight at this hour of the evening, far from camp, and darkness falling fast over the great desolate land.

We all stood still for a few seconds, and then, suddenly, the lion, scenting or seeing us I am sure, altered its course, and made across the plain in the same direction as our camp lay. It did not break into a run, but it perceptibly quickened its pace, and Cecil said, "Let's follow," and we did.

For over half an hour we kept that lion in sight and tried to get nearer to it, but it never let us. When we quickened our pace it did the same. Yet it never once stopped or looked back. There was something almost comical in its attitude of pretending not to know we were after it. My heart went pit-a-pat all the time, for to tackle a lion at dusk in grass country would be a most dangerous proceeding, and I kept imploring my companion to promise he wouldn't do it "whatever happened."

It was a most exciting half-hour. Every moment the landscape, however, became more dim, and the objects on it more blurred.

Still we pressed on, keeping the lion in sight. But he never meant to let us get anywhere near him, and the following of him was but the triumph of hope over experience.

He became at last a mere dirty smudge upon the plain.

“He gone, Milk ?” we asked of the hawk-eyed one out of the gloom, and the gentle Milk replied, “He gone—into the grass.”

Both my companion and I muttered an exclamation apiece.

His sounded like “Damn !”; mine had an equally suspicious resemblance to—“Thank Goodness.”

* * * * *

Thus, in amusements quiet and exciting, did the days pass upon the Kafue Lakes, and never saw we one soul save ourselves.

The wagon seemed to have been swallowed up into eternity, and the driver and voorlooper with it. None of our retinue worried themselves very much. Life on the lakes was a charming change from the everlasting and arduous trekking and unpacking and then packing up again. The servants took it easy and had but little to do, once the tents were done out mornings. The Miss and I wrote such huge sheaves of letters home that an alarming postage-bill when we again reached civilization seemed pretty certain.

“Our Jottings” rapidly filled up, for many were the adventures we had and the expeditions we made. I took photographs, and the O’Flaherty and I spent many stifling hours laced into my tent developing both the films and our knowledge of each other’s weaknesses, the discovery often, I regret to say, being accompanied by a total loss of temper both sides.

“Talk of militancy !” said the O’Flaherty to the others, after one of these skirmishes, ending, more often than not, in his hurriedly leaving my laced-up tent on all fours under the flaps, and a subsequent coolness lasting hours, “I declare I don’t know what’s come to the Modern Woman. All that nice sweet deference to men’s opinions and superior knowledge is gone ! bang ! It makes one wonder what will happen

when one ventures to get married ? Once upon a time, and not so long ago, a woman sort of hung upon your words of wisdom as it were. You were, even if she didn't love you, a sort of god in her eyes. You *must* know better than she did—about everything ! Now she openly defies you, flouts you, scorns you. And I tell you ” (to Cecil who sat cleaning his gun outside, while I looked through the lacings with four lovely films lying spoilt at my feet, owing to the carelessness of my would-be instructor), “ I tell you it's not only *our* Mrs. Suffragette goes on like that. I noticed it *coming out* in women everywhere, before I left England,” he concluded, much as if “ it ” was a kind of rash which covered us all thickly.

“ I noticed it too,” said the Soldier Man mildly, “ the only women who've escaped it are one's mothers and grand-mothers.”

“ Not so, old boy. My aunt is as bad as any. She married young, and ain't very old, and she's got it badly. Joined the W.S.P.U., sells papers in the streets, and you're never sure taking a stroll round London that you won't see a dense mob at a street corner, and your aunt or best girl up on a cart giving it to 'em hot.”

“ Ethel used to do that in Hyde Park, Sundays,” said Cecil, peering down his gun-barrel, “ and it kept her happy all the week I noticed.”

“ It's a mystery to me,” said the O'Flaherty, “ this hammering away for the vote ! *I've* got a vote somewhere I know ” (as if it might be in his pocket, or left behind at home) “ and *I've* never troubled to use it ! ”

“ Then you don't deserve to have it,” said I, emerging from the tent, “ you men may not, and often evidently don't, realize the power of the vote. But the Suffragettes do.”

“ What I always say is—women *can't* fight, and therefore are obviously unsuited to share in government.”

“ Oh, what nonsense ! ” said I ; “ we can do things for the race that *you* can't do,” and I quoted from Laurence Housman :

*The soldier bears the rifle,
But the Woman—bears the Race.*

The next day our wagon was seen from afar returning, and it reached our camp late that afternoon.

No amount of questioning threw any reliable light upon the cause of the long absence of the wagon from our midst. Reasons were certainly given—sore feet, sickness, dying grandparents, and so forth, but as the O'Flaherty advised Cecil who catechized :

“ Save your breath to cool your porridge, old boy. The real reason you'll never know.”

“ Probably drink,” said I, and the driver's depressed air and gait lent colour to it.

Two days more passed, waiting for one of the oxen to get well. It was very sick, poor thing, and as the whole team seemed done up we decided to give them a rest first.

We had grain enough now to last us some weeks. The servants were very pleased at the change in diet, and all day they sang rollicking choruses and songs.

We sang too, the O'Flaherty leading, and “ The Road to Mandalay ” became a favourite, and far away upon the opposite shores of the lake, the colonies of white water-fowl sat attentively, or seemed to, and listened.

*Come back, you British Soldier !
Come back to Mandalay !*

Then one beautiful afternoon it was universally agreed that our sojourn at the lakes should end.

“ To pastures new ! ” cried the O'Flaherty, “ let's be on

the move again ! To the bush ! To the bush once more ! ”

So Ceecil called to Hymn-Book and the familiar order was given, “ Strike camp at five to-morrow morning,” and I added, “ and hot tea at four.”

You could hardly see the lake as we rose, drank our tea and dressed, long before the next dawn.

A faint splashing close to my tent-ropes made me wonder when would we again see water so wide and clear ?

Dear lake ! I felt sorry to leave it ! It had been a happy time, with more of rest and peace in it than we usually met.

The darkness now slowly lifted off the lake. We were all up and dressed and bustling about. Now the tents tottered, and the whole camp assumed a tipsy air. Then each tent fell flat and were rolled into their respective bags.

What a change in the homely scene ! In a few short moments all look of home gone !

We ate our last breakfast upon the lake-edge.

We were all in the highest spirits and did not sit long, there was so much to do and see to.

By six o'clock our safari was on the move.

Crack ! went the driver's whip ! The oxen bent their patient heads to their pole, turned to the east.

“ Impala ! ” cried the aged man, plying his long flail, while the voorlooper ran frantically up and down, “ hie thee to yonder sunrise where we shall find again bush and shade by day and fragrant wood for fires by night ! Away to it ! ”

And the sixteen oxen moved all together, as if cheered by the picture.

It was a glorious morning. The lake spread out like a silver sheet. The Emerald Isle lay as if floating on it. But the world, this unknown, wide, wide world, lay before us, around us ! I sat on the wagon, propped up by cushions, and felt all the joy of the Unknown again before us. Here and

there on the skyline, black groups of dots that moved, showed that herds of buck were abroad. A great and lovely silence reigned. We plunged into the long grass, and the silver and blue Kafue Lakes sank from our view. In dreams alone shall we again visit them.

* * * * *

We travelled all day. The wagon would emerge from golden grass seas where our wheels crushed underfoot some fragrant kind of wild thyme, so delicious was the scent that came up from it. Then out into open spaces lasting miles, and upon these we saw game in extraordinary numbers, most of it obviously unused to the sight of man.

Hymn-Book was supposed to be leading us to our next destination, a spot called Choma River, where he announced that the water would be "sweet and good," and would moreover be "walking," an expression that conjured up to me only visions of either a cheese, or tadpoles and slimy crawling things, and I pondered for a while upon what a difference the way of putting things may make, for I defy anyone to smack their thirsty lips at "water walking," whereas "water running" sounds most seductive.

But as the day wore on, and no sign of any river appeared even upon the horizon, it became clear that we had missed our way once more, and fierce altercations occurred between Hymn-Book and the driver, and when each became beside himself with fury, he went, of course, head down for the voorlooper, who had nothing to say to it, but acted as a safety valve.

Night is fast falling and we are still in the centre of the wilderness, and it becomes clear we can go no farther till the friendly day once more dawns.

It ends in Cecil deciding, after complicated advice from every one, that, as it is growing dark rapidly and we have

enough water with us for every one to have a little, carefully doled out, we had best stop and pitch camp where we are, starting again at daybreak.

We all get off the wagon, and three of us decide we will not even put tents up to-night. Only the Miss says she must have her Whympers.

"I am growing very Rhodesian, or I am trying to ; but I have never yet slept, except once, in the open, and the grass is so thick round us here there seems to me great danger of lions removing us from our beds, or again attacking our camp as before."

So her tent is put up. My bed is in the open, so are the others. We are in bad lion country, and I ask Cecil, "Is it safe ? Remember the deserted village !"

He thinks yes, in view of the abundant game. "Lions don't want people when they can get game." Still, the great grass wilderness stretching into infinity all around us grows so close to our little impromptu camp that one knows a lion might well and easily crouch almost at the foot of one's bed and not be seen, and it is very lonely out here. Very wild and weird is this vast, silent, star-lit night, a young silver moon looking down at the little benighted party. Such insignificant specks on the wide desert we must seem to the wise moon—so youthful, yet centuries old !

A little way off, the servants have lit a fire of grass, for as usual there is not a twig anywhere near to make it of, and while Jonas hastily prepares soup and roasts in some marvellous fashion a small saddle of oribi, and his "slave" peels potatoes, the carriers run to and fro with bundles of the long dry grass and keep the fire fed, and the table-boys make up our beds in the open and lay our camp-table, the same one that accompanied me last on my English caravan tour. We again have our fine, big, expensive camp-lantern, which has been worth to us the money paid for it, for it lights up

the darkest camp, makes our dinner cheerful when often the fare has been necessarily cheerless, and when we are nervous of lions, as now, we leave it burning all night close to our beds.

We dine to-night to a brilliant illumination, for the carriers, very nervous themselves of the great loneliness around, set fire to a safe part of the grass sea on one side of our camp, hoping it may become a veldt fire, which will roar away into the silence beyond, and drive away lions and leopards and other noxious things. It crackles and blazes finely up to the black velvety sky all through dinner, and there are earnest discussions—is it possible it will drive the very lions we wish to avoid into our midst? The O’Flaherty, desiring to cheer us, relates us all the tales he had heard since coming to Rhodesia of people eaten by lions.

“There’s really nothing to be nervous of,” he says, when he has wound up with a thrilling account of a transport rider and his nine domestics all scratched out of their huts by ravenous lions, one of whom got on to the roof of the white man’s hut (finding a barricade below), and the white man woke to find the lion peering down at him, after which he ate him (the carriers having proved very thin). “That must have occurred in a part where big game wasn’t plentiful like here. Let me see. I think it happened quite thirty miles from here. Hullo!”

We all stop talking. I hold my breath and my heart stops beating. Whose heart would not faint at the far-off sound that meets our ears?

You must have trekked far, far into the Wilderness, as we have now done, seen no face save those of your own party for weeks, beheld no trace of even black man-Friday’s foot-prints on this great desert land, heard no voice save those of our own, and wildest Nature—the whistle of the reed-buck, the honk! honk! of the wild goose—and be unwillingly

benighted on a spot so lone as this, to understand what the roar of a Rhodesian lion means as you sit at your little dinner-table in the wilderness, and the rest black, open night. Your camp-beds are ready made for you, and are standing close by, also in the open under the stars; no roof, no walls, no thorn-fence is there even to protect you, and no friendly log-fire which will burn all night and be some safeguard.

You must have left cities, and their life and bustle far behind you, before the spell and awe of this strange unknown land surrounds you. You must have drunk deep, as we have, of its silence, its unwritten histories, tragedies, and whispered tales. You must have forgotten all other lives, they seem so far behind.

The voice of the lion then will bring back other black shrouded nights in the Desert, in spots now left to the silence. There, perhaps at this moment, prowl dark forms round the pale fairy rings your tents made in the grass, sole evidence now of your sojourn there? You often sat there too, and trembled at the Voice in the Wilderness!

To-night only the quiet heavens look down at those past halting places. All other trace of us there is gone, as utterly as the shooting star that fell into nothingness a moment ago.

But the Voice . . . it seems to have followed you. . . .

"Let us go to bed," I say, standing up. "The grass has stopped burning. It will be a very dark night."

"Except for the new moon," says some one.

"Which makes it lonelier."

We, who are to sleep in the open, lie down almost as we are, and as my head touches my pillow I feel a sense of far-off Home and Comfort, when Hymn-Book, thinking of his life at the Mission Station on Tanganyika, and sitting huddled up

with his brethren, starts to softly drone his evening prayer :

*Abide with me,
Fast falls the Eventide,
The Darkness deepens ;
Lord, with me abide.*

CHAPTER XLI

WE all passed a restless night, the sense of insecurity was so great ; and delightful as it is to sleep in the open as regards the air, the sweet, fragrant coolness, and the strange joy of the great star-lit canopy, which is your sole roof, we declared we would not do it again unless compelled—certainly not in bad lion-country like this.

Even salted old Rhodesians, inured to every form of danger, and willing to run many risks in the strange lives nearly every one leads beyond the Zambesi, tell us they would not sleep in the open without a thorn fence or in a ring of camp fires.

So I tell myself, as I wake to find early tea at my elbow and the dear safe white day come again, that I think I have been often rather brave to have slept in the open with no protection of fire or thorns, as I have to-night and so many other times !

The lions, whose voices struck such awe to our hearts last night, now no longer inspire quite so much terror or even respect !

Once daylight has come I would not much mind to see one quite close to camp. I may be mistaken, but I don't believe it would even frighten me ! So I inform the Soldier Man as we both occupy ourselves doing our hair in the open with the charming unconcern that this life of makeshifts engenders. He sits on his camp-bed and has a mirror (one of a lot originally bought as " presents for chiefs ") on a table

in front of him, and is currycombing his head with frightful energy. I stand near my bed, and with my head down, and all my hair turned over my face from the nape of my neck, I maintain the conversation in rather smothered accents. Hard by, the O'Flaherty, still in his bed, reads a year-old *Field*, picked up at some farm on our wanderings, and a little farther on the Miss is seated mending a hole (torn by the branch of a tree in bush-land catching our wagon) in her tent-fly, the patch being a piece of the O'Flaherty's "civilization" trousers, as all conventional garments are now termed. If we turned up in any town or dorp dressed as we all dress now we'd have a crowd after us, if only to admire the ladies in skirts to their knees and blouses thrown open at the neck, and no collars in the whole party.

The "daylight start" has not taken place, as overnight arranged. Hymn-Book mounted a small tree, the only one for about five miles, at dawn, and announced, "He, Choma River, no far away. Wagon do it when sun there" (pointing half-way towards sunset). So Cecil called to every one they could take it easy, and we would load up and start after breakfast. The O'Flaherty is ever the last to get out of bed, and has been known to arrive spick and span at breakfast precisely six minutes after he had made the final wrench from his couch. He likes to be called about 4 A.M., and onwards at intervals of fifteen minutes till the porridge is steaming on the table. He keeps eight or ten heavy boots close to his bed to hurl at Big Ben when that functionary, in fear and trembling, goes to report him the passage of time as evinced by the native clock, the sun. I never get enough sleep, because the O'Flaherty will *not* relax his rule to be punctually called at 4 A.M. I am dreaming of oribi hunts, and whether the sugar will last out the trek, and so on, when invariably I am brought back to realities by the early-morning whine of Big Ben stating, "Four o'clock,

Baas. Sun coming out of ground soon," after which he makes a rapid bolt for it, the first boot generally catching him all the same. Slumber after that is no more, for the performance is repeated at regular intervals, and when remonstrated with, the O'Flaherty explains, "It's the best part of bed, being called and turning over for another snooze. Don't ask me to give it up. It's the only part when I know I am enjoying myself."

It is very unusual for Cecil to be in camp at all at this hour. He is generally gone and miles away by six, and Hymn-Book and Sponge-cake, his gun-bearers, behind him; and while we dress we make guesses to each other, with each shot we hear, as to what we shall have for dinner to-night.

"I bet that's the letchwe he swore he'd get yesterday."

"That was surely the shot-gun," calls the Miss, her mouth full of hairpins; "how delightful roast duck, with sage-and-onion stuffing, would be for lunch to-day!"

"There are no onions left, and never was any sage," I call back, standing shading my gaze with my hand. "Oh, I see him—running! Hymn-Book after him! Oh, it's some oribi jumping, jumping, in such pretty leaps and bounds into the air! Poor little pets! and yet I do want their skins for my jacket!"

Sometimes the O'Flaherty has an energetic fit and tears himself suddenly from his couch at these enticing reports, and goes a-hunting in pyjamas, returning half-way through breakfast literally soaked in gore. I never can make out why this is, and whether he gets bodily into the animal while it's cut up or what. Sometimes he arrives breathless with excitement over some successful stalk, and, his feelings too deep for words, thrusts (without a syllable) a dripping head and horns right under our noses, while we toy with poached eggs or marmalade.

But to-day no one has gone a-hunting. There will be plenty

of chances on the trek to the Choma River, and so while I brush out my hair I tell Cecil that I can't understand why I was so frightened at the lion's roar last night, as this morning I would go and try to shoot one myself if he'd only come along.

"The daylight lion," says Cecil, "is like the ghost story next morning ; nothing in it."

Now the servants are hurrying up with breakfast, lighting a small grass fire, fed by the kitchen stove, close to our table, to ensure our getting our food hot—my idea—and carrying the kettle, saucepan, and frying-pans off the big kitchen fire to it, and then dishing it up—the mornings, and the unchecked breezes of the desert, still being cold enough to cool your food rapidly when your only roof is the open sky.

Sunset of that day finds our camp picturesquely pitched upon the very edge of the Choma River, an estuary about the width and depth of an English woodland brook in which one might search for watercress.

But in this thirsty, dry land we hail it with joy. It runs merrily over shining stones and here and there falls into deep pools, one of which we set apart as the camp bathing-pool, another (down-stream) being handed over to the servants and carriers for their ablutions.

I generally go, on arriving in camp, and choose the kitchen ; and ours here is inside a grove of shady trees, the river flowing close by for culinary purposes. I did attempt once to have the camp "kitchen" kept clean and tidy, and we would have morning "saucepan inspection," but we gave it up because of the vertigo that followed it and the fanning and eau-de-Cologne which had to be administered afterwards.

Dinner consists to-night of roan beef-tea in cups, Irish stew of reed-buck, four fine black-and-white korhaans shot *en route* here (and their wings handed to Hymn-Book to cure for my hat), sweet native potatoes and native pumpkin mashed, evaporated peaches from our chop-boxes, and dry

rice with them ; the finale being roan-marrow on toast. Not a bad banquet for the wilds.

Now the table is cleared, and we draw chairs round the great log fire, one of the great luxuries of camp in the bush-country, as this one is.

The moon, older and brighter to-night, came up over the kitchen grove as if peeping at us.

A loud snarl behind some bushes makes me jump.

"Probably a tiger-cat," says some one, and then, as a heavy crashing of branches farther off in the darkness makes us all listen, the O'Flaherty says, "This is leopard country, isn't it ? Can't be a lion here. They can't stand thorns."

"What a ghastly noise !" murmured some one else, half nodding over the fire. . . .

Thrum, thrum . . . bump, bump, bump, howl, howl . . . as of lost souls in purgatory. . . .

"Oh, dear !" I murmur, listening ; "it's another beer festival in the kraal. I thought they were over a month ago. Now you will all see. We sha'n't be able to trek to-morrow, for the driver and all the servants will be drunk and will say they 'are sick.'"

"I'm prepared for that," says the O'Flaherty ; "we may not be able to trek, but, by Jingo, if we don't, I'll force an ounce of Epsom salts down each fellow's throat as an antidote."

The shrieks from the kraal grow wilder. . . . The native women are dancing and the drums throbbing, and the men adding to the music with long-drawn-out howls. . . . And these sounds have not ceased or abated till night is nearly gone and a new dawn stands on tiptoe upon the kopjes, away on the skyline.

* * * * *

When morning came, not a servant was fit to stand up, much less work. Big Ben brought tea, and had to be sent

away, his condition was so imbecile—a fact he attributed to the death overnight of his “grandmother.” Nouveau Riche, being sent for, announced that his father was no more, and then came Jonas, who was heartbroken at the passing away of some other relation, while even Hymn-Book shed crocodile tears at the hourly expected demise of some one near and dear who had miraculously turned up at Choma River kraal and was about to succumb to the same mysterious epidemic. Each perfidious servant thought he was the first to be questioned, and, reassured by my placidity, took the cup of tea given him to the tent it was meant for, and retired to the kitchen grove, looking vastly relieved. But I would have liked to see their faces after they had all compared notes !

Breakfast was a miserable meal, cooked anyhow, and so after it was over, Cecil called up all the servants and asked them where they had all gone last night. “To the beer festival at the kraal,” they confessed, and the O’Flaherty said, “I thought so !” and went into his tent, emerging again with a bedroom jug full of something mixed. Deep alarm on all the servants’ faces ! “Here we are, stuck for to-day at least,” said he, “and probably a week, for that old beast of a driver is really ill with drink. Lies under the wagon, and is all swollen up, he says. May die, for their beer is sometimes awful poison, I’ve heard. Here we are planted (and not a good game place) for the Lord knows how long, for there’s no one to drive the oxen. So we’ll have our revenge. Hymn-Book, open your mouth and shut your eyes and see what the king has sent you.”

Too terrified to resist, each domestic stood and opened wide his mouth while the O’Flaherty went down the line with his bedroom jug full of Epsom salts dissolved in lukewarm water and tipped about a tumblerful down each throat. As each delinquent got it (and the O’Flaherty

remarked, passing on to the next, "That'll cure you ! When your grandmother dies again, come to me for more ") he fled with howls into the trees round the camp, and all day the whole staff were very "chup."

By next morning every one was cured for a long while to come, except the old driver, who lay groaning heavily under the wagon, shut in from public gaze by buckskins, which smelt awful, being only half-cured.

We left him to the O'Flaherty, who, having brought a medicine chest on trek, is regarded by common consent as the doctor of the party, and who now, finding time hang heavy at Choma River, the game being scarce and wild, beguiled the days reading up a work entitled "Physician, Heal Thyself" (purporting to teach you how to avoid all future doctor's bills), and as he finished each disease he would go and get out the medicine for it and find some one in the kraal or camp to give it to.

"But surely," said I, meeting him and the Miss in the kraal, whither Cecil and I had repaired to buy assegais and civet-cat skins, "*that* man hasn't got perambulating typhoid ?"

"I know he has ! He's got three of the most marked symptoms. You listen to this : 'The patient gets about as usual' (just what he's doing, you see). 'He complains of pain in the abdomen' (I prodded him and asked did it hurt, and he said 'Yes'), 'and is extremely irritable and hard to please' (we found him hammering his wife with the butt-end of an axe, didn't we ?"—to the Miss).

"You know what these medical books are, O'Flaherty," said Cecil ; "each disease has about a dozen symptoms, which also fit every other disease under the sun. When you have read them—such, at least, is my experience—you are quite certain you have no business to be anywhere but in your grave. You will terrify these simple natives

into believing they have every ailment known to man."

"Don't you fret," said our doctor. "I'm being very careful, and not at present giving any of the prescriptions containing prussic acid or strychnine, or anything *too* violent."

"Good Lord!" said Cecil, "the quicker we get out of Choma River the better."

"Look here, Mrs. Suffragette," said the O'Flaherty that evening, sitting round the camp fire after dinner, "I've got an idea." Of course, every one called out the usual witticism, "You don't mean to say so?" But our friend continued, "It's jolly dull here waiting for that infernal driver to recover. Let's have a native Suffrage meeting in the kraal!"

"But," said I, "I can't talk Mashakalumbwe. It would be great fun, though of course I should also take it seriously, and do all I could to awaken up all those poor downtrodden women to a sense of their subjection."

"I say, O'Flaherty," said the Soldier Man, "I wish you wouldn't! No one can say how it might end. Once put into these women's heads the ideas our English women have got, and there may easily be murder in the land, for the men won't stand it."

This put "my back" up, and I said, "Then they'll just *have* to stand it; and, anyhow, I don't think they can treat them very much worse than our English women have been treated, you know—I mean, considering that the men here are only savages. But yes! I want the meeting. Let's have it, if you think Hymn-Book will make a good interpreter."

So Hymn-Book was sent for, and the O'Flaherty explained things to him; but Hymn-Book couldn't grasp it at all, though he averred modestly that there was no language *he* had ever heard of that he couldn't interpret.

"An unholy muddle he'll make of it," said the O'Flaherty,

"but never mind. It will be a rare lark to start the Suffrage in Central Africa. The missis here, Hymn-Book, she belong to a society of ladies what say women must help rule England. She want to tell Mashakalumbwe women to insist same thing."

"But the men will no have," said Hymn-Book, staring horror-struck. "Womans no can do such thing."

"Ah, Hymn-Book," said I, "all men say that; but it doesn't make it true. I going talk to the women of Choma River, and tell them they just as good as the men."

"Missis make plenty trouble," replied Hymn-Book, shaking his head. "Me no say nothing about clever English lady help rule England. English ladies *plenty* clever—more clever than some of the Baas I meet. Can read, write, talk, and know everythings, same as any English gentlemens. But if missis make Mashakalumbwe women bobbery [troublesome]—plenty row in kraal. Husbands plenty beat, womens plenty howl."

But all this only roused my ire all the higher on behalf of my sex, black or white, and I commanded Hymn-Book to announce at the kraal that a Suffrage meeting would be held there, in the open space round which every kraal is built, next morning "when sun up *there*" (pointing).

Social, and even domestic, engagements amongst the Choma River élite can easily be postponed; so when we repaired next morning to the village hard-by, making our carriers drag our wagon into the clearing as a platform, we found that, short as was the notice, not only was all Choma River there, but that other tribes were pouring in to listen to the words of wisdom from my lips, and of which they had somehow already heard rumours round the district. Everything now depended upon with what ability and fidelity Hymn-Book would interpret my remarks. I stood up on the front of the wagon, Hymn-Book at my left hand, and I began,

Hymn-Book translating each sentence as I delivered it. Cecil sat on a chop-box close to me and puffed at his meer-schaum. But his sjambok lay beside him in case of trouble. The O’Flaherty and the Miss also sat on the wagon behind me, and now and then the O’Flaherty, whose one desire was to raise what he called “ hell and tommy ” amongst these peaceful villagers and set every one by the ears, started to his feet and bawled out some remark or other, such as “ Don’t you women stand it any longer ! (Translate that, Hymn-Book.) Just you women tell that dodderly old induna to go and sit in his hut and eat pap, and *you’ll* make the laws.” And so on and so on.

“ Do shut up,” said I, “ I can’t remember half I want to say.”

But the O’Flaherty was fairly started, and calling up a rather pretty girl with a baby on her back, he asked her which was her husband, and she said “ That one ! ” and pointed to a mummy-like person about as old as Methuselah.

“ Disgraceful ! ” said the O’Flaherty, “ can’t be allowed. You tell her, Hymn-Book, and tell the lot of ’em (the women, I mean), to have at once a general post, alter their marriage laws and bring in divorce, and each woman to choose a new husband, the one she likes best.”

Cecil shouted, “ No ! look here ! we shall have awful trouble ! ” but Hymn-Book was already rapidly translating, and seemed so excited that I was puzzled, till the O’Flaherty informed us in a whisper that Hymn-Book had a fancy himself for the lady in question, and was now *entirely* in favour of Woman’s Suffrage.

As soon as I could get a word in, I began again, and told my audience what I felt about things in general as regards the sexes. Of course, I didn’t talk the nonsense the O’Flaherty kept bursting in with (spoiling the effect of mine to a great extent), but it was plain that I started amazingly new ideas

in the woolly heads packed all round the wagon, especially the ladies'.

"Tell them, Hymn-Book, that God made women just as good as men."

Hymn-Book announced this fact, and every one looked puzzled.

"What have you told them, Hymn-Book?"

"I tell them, missis, God make the women."

"But that's not what I said. Of course God made women. But now all the men are wondering who made *them*. Tell them in another way, then. Say, 'Women! do your men treat you properly?'"

Hymn-Book translated, and there was a pause.

Then a perfect babel of voices arose, men and women all talking at once. Several women, old and young, pressed up to the wagon and began shrilly relating their matrimonial grievances, which Hymn-Book rapidly translated to me.

"*This* woman she get big knock on head 'cos she spoil husband's dinner. She no love her husband. Kill him, only too afraid."

"I say, Ethc," said Cceil amidst the din (for it was plain that as a match to a fire, long smouldering, had my words been to the women of Choma River), "I say, is this wise? Remember the raw material you're dealing with."

"But I'm so sorry for them. Do let me go on. All I want to do is to *awake* the women, as it were."

Apparently that was already accomplished. A kind of war-dance was now taking place—a sort of sex-war-dance. The women, emboldened by my remarks, were "going for" the men, both with tongues and fingers. One husband retreated, his face scratched; another was dodging his wife round the wagon. Another crowd stood shouting at each other. And with great difficulty a temporary cessation of hostilities was secured, and I began again.



TWO BLUSHING BRIDES WANTING THE SUFFRAGE

"Tell them, Hymn-Book, that if, in village and kraal, only mans make laws, women have bad time, 'cos man sometimes velly selfish thing. Only think of himself. Womans *must* help make laws, or else get plenty beating and hard work. The mans must work, too. Nothing else to do here. What for the women working all day here, and the mans lying asleep in sun, or smoking, or playing bones on the ground? That not fair, tell them. Woman, she do work of hut, cook, wash, have babies, and take care of them. That enough! Man, he must fetch the water and plant the mealies, and if he say, 'No, I no do that,' then the womens must answer, 'Very well, then you no eat nor drink.'"

Another pause, and then once more, general uproar, and in the middle of it up came one fat man, *very* angry indeed.

"Who is this?" said I.

"This is Asquith," said the O'Flaherty, "and he says it's all tommy-rot, this kind of thing. Women are inferior creatures and he'll never consent."

Then, as another half-clad savage danced up, the O'Flaherty introduced him as Lloyd George, and after him arrived McKenna and Harcourt, and all danced a war-dance together round the women, brandishing axes. I kept on asking the O'Flaherty to please stop his nonsense and let me get on, and when quiet was restored "Asquith" (the induna) demanded to know *what* this strange and horrid idea was, of women being equal to men? How could they be? Since all time woman had been subject to man.

"Tell Asquith," I replied, "that *he* once was a monkey, and before that perhaps a cauliflower, but isn't he glad that he has progressed?"

"He says men were *meant* to progress. Women are for men's use and pleasure only, and must remain at that, for *if* they progressed, all that would alter, and it would not be so nice for the men."

"Well! you're quite right to call him Asquith," said I; "there's not much to choose between the two gentlemen's ideas. What says Lloyd George?"

No one could find out what he said—or thought. He just danced round, and though he didn't attack the women himself, he egged the others on to do so.

McKenna did whatever the others did, on principle. In fact, it was plain that "the women are down, so keep them down," was the motto here as elsewhere.

"Tell them, Hymn-Book," said I, "that the world is the women's as much as it is the men's, and the women's share of keeping it going, is just as hard and important as the man's; therefore is it only right she helps to make the rules which all have got to observe."

I have no idea whether all this reached my audience in anything like its proper sense. Hymn-Book gabbled hard and gesticulated (one eye all the time upon the mummy's wife), and there was much confab and "questions." The younger men didn't seem to mind the new creed half as much as the elders, the reason for this (it transpired) being that a redistribution of attractive wives (now the property of the older men) seemed to loom out of it all, should it ever take shape.

The "meeting" lasted an hour and a half, and when we left, quiet was restored, but it was evident that we had given both men and women thoughts to think out.

"It'll bear fruit some day," said the O'Flaherty, "and we shall find 'Votes for Women' being preached in every kraal by dusky Suffragettes ten years hence. I'll own it's queer, the way those women responded. Ripe for it—or so it looked."

"The whole world is getting ripe for it," said I; "I am sure that it is, bar none, the most important movement of the age."

The next morning Hymn-Book told us that two husbands had obediently gone down in the morning to the river and drawn water for their wives' needs ! I was delighted.

"And forty women," shouted the O'Flaherty from his tent, "have signed a petition to King Luanika asking for the vote. And, lor' bless you, they're so up to date now, that Hymn-Book tells me last night the women had a meeting, and, there being no windows to break, they knocked down several huts, and in consequence an Anti-Suffrage League has been started, who are also holding meetings. "Asquith" by all accounts led a war-dance in paint and feathers, declaring that as long as he's Prime Minister they shall never have the vote. The Antis, however, are all *men* here."

Our jokes that time at Choma River seem to have been almost prophetic.

At all events, I recalled Choma River when, the other day (two and a half years later), I found myself gazing at a certain cartoon, depicting the doings of "the chief medicine-man at Llanstumdwy kraal."

It was the third day before we got away.

Early next morning we once more resumed our travels, our next destination being a village in wildest bush country, where kudu were to be found, we heard.

It was two long days' march to it.

Our road led us through most beautiful country, all forests, now in early summer attire and gay with the wonderful flowering trees—the flower usually blooming in the spring before a leaf appears, and the effect is that of a great purple, pink, blue, yellow, or white nosegay the size of a small haystack.

We passed through low mountain ranges, emerged into lovely vleis and valleys, where we often saw buck feeding, but were too pressed for time to stop and shoot any ; and then miles again of dense forest, then open country, with the

bronze-brown grass roofs of little peaceful kraals shining far away in the sun like copper; then more hills, wooded, silent, lovely; then open green slopes, with grass as fine and soft, once or twice, as an English meadow—flowers everywhere underfoot, and the Miss with a small handbook on botany, having specimens handed up to her in such masses that it was impossible she could mutilate them all, which appears to be the aim of the botanist. Everything she gets she cuts open, but why I never discovered, nor what one found out. She never, for instance, calls a flower by its own name. It's always a "*Lenum glossaris*," or some such appellation, and the O'Flaherty, who walked by the wagon, would be much exercised in his mind at an appeal to "Oh, please, Mr. O'Flaherty, that lovely *Regina nosticum*" (I have invented this name, because I cannot remember the real ones); "I must have it!"

"But . . . where? Which? Is it the crow's-foot you mean?"

"No, no; the sweet-pea! That mauve one!"

"Oh, I see! But, look here [handing it up], I never did understand Latin or . . . Greek. Tell me their English names, and we shall get on faster."

"Botany is a dee-lightful study," said the Soldier Man politely. "But—do you know?—it is now 3 P.M., and we have twelve miles more to do before dark, if possible."

This ends the botany for the time being and we push on.

We pass Bullenbe's kraal, then Syngala's kraal, Spalubwe's kraal, and Munymbwe's kraal.

At each one there is a mad rush to have a look at the English mississes! Few have ever been seen before, if any.

Night has fallen ere we reach a pretty farm high up in the healthy, cool, and very windy Lusakas district, where many Dutch people from Southern Africa are taking up farms and doing very well. English settlers also are farming at and

around Lusakas, for here we are in the highlands of North-West Rhodesia. In mid-cold weather a blizzard blows. Now even there is a fresh gale, and the wagon emerges into those breezy uplands, whose characters are more those of the high veldt than anything I have seen since the Transvaal, and the water runs cold and sparkling and trees are few and far between. We all stand high up on the wagon and draw the fine air into our lungs with delight. Up on the green hill ahead of us stands a woman in a blue dress, watching our approach. A white woman ! The first we have seen for many a long day.

Behind her is a snug homestead. Cows low musically as a small herdbooy leads them home for the night ; the bleat of goats and baa of sheep come across a small running stream to our ears.

" Golly ! " says the O'Flaherty. " This is like the Old Country. I bet the woman in the blue dress is Oirish ! "

" I bet she's Dutch ! " I reply, and we have ten shillings on it.

She comes to meet us, and looks somewhat alarmed when the O'Flaherty rushes at her demanding to know is she Irish. " Because," says he, " we've got a bet on it."

" Whatte are Arish ? " says the lady. " I am Dutch. Oh, yes, I think I have heard tell of Arland ! Ees it notte a bog far away, and its peeples very wild and hard to manage ? "

" You're right," says the O'Flaherty, " and here's one of 'em ! And all for Home Rule ! "

And he brandishes a sjambok over his head and yells his pet refrain once more :

*Oh, I happened to be borrn,
At the time they cut the corrn,
Contagious to the town of Killaloo,*

and executes a solemn *pas seul* in front of the good vrouw,

that evidently confirms her impressions about this new nationality, for she recedes slowly backwards, ejaculating, " My word ! "

* * * * *

Before we left that Lusakas farm to resume our travels the good Dutchman and his vrouw were deeply suspicious that we were taking round on trek with us an irreclaimable rake or else an amiable lunatic. Every night the exuberant O'Flaherty left our camp (where the rest of us were content to sit by the log fire and talk quietly of adventures past and to come), and, seating himself in the Dutchman's mud kitchen, he sang them rollicking music-hall songs and told them stories of London society which made the hair of the worthy couple almost stand up. The Dutch lady decided that no one could live in London and go to Heaven. The husband said he would like to see it all for himself—to make sure it was true.

We trekked away one morning at five. The breezy upland farm sank behind the hill.

And that chapter closed.

CHAPTER XLII

FROM the upland farm we proceeded towards our next goal, the Junga Village, where kudu were reported, but it took two days' hard trek to reach it. The first night we spent at a wild, green spot on the edge of the bush, called Mullendemma's kraal. There was here a kind of bowling-green of soft, fine, green turf, very rare in Central Africa, and we naturally selected it for our camp. Hymn-Book on going down to the village in the valley just below us, to buy milk and eggs for us, informed us on his return that a "much big lion" had the previous night carried off the "oldest inhabitant," who (according to native custom, and having become troublesome with his years and his fancies) had been carried to the border of the forest to meet whatever fate an all-wise Providence should send along—starvation, thirst, or wild beasts.

The lion was, therefore, to-day quite a hero. He had relieved the whole village of a nuisance, and the O'Flaherty, who has expectations from some ancient female at home who simply *refuses* to die, was much struck at the sound common sense of the whole proceeding and the absence of all sickly sentimentality. He regaled us at tea with the high opinion he entertained of so-called "savage customs," and gave vent to loud anathema of our civilized methods, whereby deserving people are kept out of their own, while youth and health are theirs to enjoy it, and useless lives are dragged out upon a bed surrounded with medicine bottles,

doctors, nurses, and other expenses, which it is hard (said our O'Flaherty), for the next of kin to view except as "unwarrantable interference with Providence."

The talk drifted on to lions carrying people off, and what to do if you met a lion unawares and unarmed, and the O'Flaherty said personally he should kneel down and crawl towards it, growling, a proceeding which saved the life of a Scotchman we met at Kafue, the foe being so frightened that it bolted.

We all retired to our tents early, so as to be up early, and about 1 A.M. I awoke very thirsty and found that that miserable Big Ben had forgotten to fill my canvas water-bucket, and I was so parched with thirst that I got up and made the round of the tents for water; but alas! I found none, so in despair and very nervous I crossed the space separating our tents from the wagon and kitchen, and found Jonas's water-bucket full, to my great joy.

I was kneeling drinking from my cup when some sound from the edge of the forest, growing close to me, made me look up, and there some huge dark animal stood, apparently watching me, in a patch of shade cast by the moon and a large tree. For an instant I was rooted to the spot. Then . . . I saw it advance towards me. . . .

My sensations. . . . Need I dilate upon them? Suffice it to say that, bearing in mind the adage *never* to turn your back upon the enemy, I also recollected our tea-time conversation, and dropped to my knees, hoping the lion would flee as I advanced.

But it didn't. I can't say I advanced fast. I just kept on all fours, and now and then glanced up, feeling indeed more dead than alive.

Yet on it came, and my blood curdled, and I turned, still on my hands and knees, and made for the friendly shelter of the wagon, and reaching it I got under it, and then wheeled round to see how the land lay, and bang came my head

against another head, and . . . it was not a lion at all, but the O’Flaherty.

I expect little benighted Mullendemma’s kraal will never again see such a comedy enacted.

There we knelt, the English lady and gentleman, she out in search of water, he out because he had heard something moving (me, of course, hunting outside his tent for water), and had got up, seized his rifle, and seeing a dark form close to the earth near the wagon made sure it was a lion, and slipped into the bush, made a short *détour*, and got opposite. The marvel was he did not shoot me dead!

“But,” said he, sitting by me on the grass in the moonlight, “I almost at once saw it was you, and I popped down on all fours for fun. You saw me, and down you went too, and . . . oh, lor’! . . . we’ll send it home to *Punch* . . . eh, what? . . . I’ll never forget our advancing upon each other, both growling hard.”

“I *didn’t* growl.”

“Author’s license. Sounds funny. Here comes the Miss in dressing-gown and curl-papers to see what’s up.”

And very soon we had all collected, for the scream that I had given on bumping into my “lion” had woken up the whole camp, and the tale was retold with a few more of the O’Flaherty’s embellishments.

Altogether there was but little sleep in camp that night, for it was 2 A.M. before all again was quiet, and at five we were once more astir, laughing over it all as we hurried through six o’clock breakfast, and by seven we were deep once more in forest country.

For a while it was green and beautiful. Then it changed, and we entered, and for hours passed through, a desolate region, grim of aspect, for here a mighty fire had passed, and had burnt the whole forest for many miles. Not a tree but was blackened and charred, and many of these had been

seized by the white ants and were cased in their red mud—a sorry sight—and we were glad when all this ended, and we emerged again into fair open country, the ground carpeted with flowers.

* * * * *

“Listen!” I cried, holding up my hand, “it’s a river!”

We women were seated high atop of our possessions piled on the wagon. The two men walked beside.

We had trekked all day and had seen no water.

Now a deep gurgling sound reached us and a long sigh of delight went up.

For the Central African shooting party there is no melody in nature to touch that of deep, clear and plentiful water, and good to drink or bathe in.

You must have traversed this dry land and especially the Kafue Sahara as we have done to know what a precious thing water may become.

There, as I described, for two weeks, the drop of fluid you washed in was kept to wash in again—and yet again. To spill it was a crime.

But those dry days are over, and this is the land of everlasting promise, and when a few moments later we are passing through the Junga kraal, our progress almost stopped by the happy, excited villagers who never yet have beheld white women, we know that good times await us here, for the very bee-hive huts look clean. The faces of the occupants shine with the health, peace, and prosperity which a river that never dries up always brings to the fortunate people living on it in the Far Rhodesias.

The next moment the broad and running stream is almost beneath our wagon wheels, and we all dismount, and the servants and carriers start to unload the wagon and carry our tents and possessions across flat stones to the park-like land opposite, where already, obedient to the commands

of Hymn-Book, yelled forth as we entered the kraal, "Go, my brothers, and clear the forest beyond the river for their Highnesses!" forty or fifty chattering villagers with axes are making ready for our riverside camp.

Ten minutes later I am sitting with the Miss on the green bank, and we have removed our stockings and are laving in sheer delight our bare feet in the crystal depths. A crowd of natives regards us respectfully from the opposite shore (the river is only a few feet across) with something of the same interested albeit take-no-liberties-for-he-bites-look with which one contemplates the tiger or the grizzly bear in the Zoo. We are decidedly curious and interesting, but no one will approach too close, though large, flat, white rocks make a perfect stepping-stone bridge across.

How wonderful to find this pretty kraal and its simple people and life-giving stream set down alone in this Never-Never land so far from everywhere! Round us stretches green forest, leading to nowhere and everywhere. We have arrived at the very Back of Beyond!

We all agree, as we later lunch under a large tree, that we are tired of the daily trekking. Here we will remain for a week at least. Why not?

And so the days pass, and a more or less lazy fit is on us all.

There is so much to do in camp directly a halt does take place. Making the table-boys do the camp washing (a big accumulation after forced marches and long scarcities of water) is one. Letters also have to be written, and a servant will take them thirty, forty, fifty miles on foot to the nearest white man, who, in his turn will post them—when he can. The O'Flaherty and I, on these halts, also develop our photographs. We use the New Kodak developing tank, and the whole business, in a hot, tightly laced-up tent, under the flaps of which we have to crawl backwards and forwards to yell for "more water," appears trying to every one's temper,

especially when once the whole tent collapsed and every photo was spoilt. On that occasion the O'Flaherty and I did not speak again for three days.

Mornings and evenings we all go a-shooting. The sport is excellent. Even in this wondrous land of big game it surpasses anything we have yet seen, for every day now takes us farther into the heart of the wilds, and has, for weeks past. Civilization has long become as "a tale that is told."

On our first evening in this riverside camp we could see buck feeding here and there in the forest around us, some way off, yet quite plain, when you had learnt, as we have, to "spot" game. Meals, in this strange wild life, are often interrupted by one or other of us seizing his or her rifle (always placed handy) and rushing off after something tempting, the trusty gun-bearers, also swallowing food with one eye open in the camp "kitchen," starting up to follow. The remaining ones sit and watch the stalk, and when it grows exciting the whole camp of sixty souls is on its feet, looking on breathless.

Here, at the Junga River, the reed-buck are so plentiful that we no longer shoot them. Of their flesh we are tired. Of their horns we have enough. They whistle warning to each other and often frighten away something we do want. On the second day two officious reed-buck lost Cecil a fine kudu.

For kudu is royal game and scarce; you are only allowed one to your licence, and we have come here to get him. He is always found in thick forest country like this, a provision of Nature for his protection, for his beautiful branching horns resemble the tree branches, and he has but to stand still and the unpractised eye misses him.

"I almost tumble over reed-buck," says the Soldier Man mornings at breakfast, "but it's kudu and roan I want. I will leave you, O'Flaherty, if you don't mind, to keep the

camp supplied with meat, as you can't go at present for trophies."

The O'Flaherty still suffers at times from bruised heels from over-walking, and must at present again take it easy, so he says, "Right you are. Only it may have to be reed-buck. One walked not far past my tent last evening asking to be shot."

"Let us two women go out this morning and try to get the dinner," says the Miss. "Eh?"

"All right," says the O'Flaherty. "Take my rifle and let's see what happens."

"What happens" is, I must confess it, no dinner that evening save sweet potatoes and bread and jam. The Miss and I return from the chase feeling *very* small.

"After the gory battle that raged east and west in the forest this morning, this is a bitter blow," says the O'Flaherty, at the evening meal. "I made cock-shure we'd have a royal spread. Why! at least four reed-buck, also two oribi, and an impala, went tearing past the camp a short way off, seemingly whisking their tails and thoroughly enjoying the fun."

"I know I hit a lovely little oribi," says the Miss, "and I chased him a mile, but he got away."

But the O'Flaherty, disgustedly spreading apricot jam on biscuits, continues remorselessly :

"Forty rounds of ammunition gone between the two of you, and devil a bit to eat except a black and white Rhodesian crow which Mrs. Suffragette here slaughtered, and hove in sight with it, I assure you, Captain, *crying*, 'because she had never dreamt she'd hit it.'"

"Come with me this evening, Ethel," says Cecil to me. "I'm going after a fine herd of roan that 'Milk' tells me are a few miles off. Will you come? and carry your own little rifle?"

At four o'clock P.M. I emerge from my tent ready dressed in short trek-skirt and blouse of tints not calculated to scare away game. One woman we met at a lonely farm insisted on accompanying the chase in a scarlet dress and white hat, and we never got near anything. My kit is all soft, nondescript tobacco-brown, or "dirt-colour," as I called it when our Warrior Man insisted on a voice in the selection.

Tea is going on under our leafy parlour (a large tree one mass of white honey-flowers), but we are too excited to do more than gulp down a cup and depart. "Hymn-Book," the gentle "Milk," and two carriers, armed with knives and axes, follow at our heels.

"We will keep along the river," says my companion, "and see what happens. We may see kudu in the bush, and if so will go after them, but the roan keep in the open, 'Milk' says."

We have walked about three miles, and all signs of human beings and huts have long ceased. We are in the very heart of the African bush, which, however, does not all the way grow close up to the river. This now and then widens out into great swamps, covered with rank reeds, and round these we have to make long detours, our path then passing through the edges of thick forest, mostly composed of the big flowering trees of singular beauty (and of kinds, I expect, almost unknown to civilized man) which, as I have said, are such a charming feature of the bush country of the Further Rhodesias beyond the Zambesi.

Suddenly "Milk" whispers, "Hiss . . . t . . ." and, crouching down, points to where, at the edge of the forest, we can plainly see, quietly feeding, five fine big roan, their chocolate skins powdered with grey, and their sharp, black horns quite clearly defined against some bushes covered with the pale blue blossom of plumbago.

A large tract of swamp lies between us and the river,

and so as to approach the roan unseen we remain in the cover of the bush, and bending into crouching positions and taking immense care not to tread upon dry twigs we approach them, slowly but surely. After a few minutes Cecil bends down . . . and signs to us to do the same.

The roan were feeding unconcernedly, but it is evident have now become anxious. One magnificent fellow stands, head up, sniffing the breeze suspiciously, but the wind for us is right, and he remains looking in our direction while we, flat on the earth, move not an eyelid.

How silent the great forest seems to have become ! Something black sails heavily overhead. I look up and see a monster bird like an aeroplane, with great, flat, dusky wings, and curtains hanging from them, a most curious spectacle, and each wing as large as a small flat tea-table ; and it flaps, flaps, over our heads, away to the setting sun.

Cecil is moving along the earth now, his rifle ready cocked, and " Milk " crawls at his heels. Then comes myself, and then Hymn-Book and the carriers, all crawling too.

Crash, crash . . . and the forest echoes as if with other shots. Leaping to our feet, we behold all five roan madly galloping towards the marsh and river beyond, the rear one, the finest of all, obviously wounded. I can never see that sight without qualms of pity, but I have long learnt to smother all signs of such. I am on a shooting-trip and must behave accordingly.

We all start now to run as hard as we can go after Cecil, who, rapidly reloading his rifle as he runs, follows the five roan over the piece of ground leading to the marsh.

Crash into the depths of the heavy bog go the two foremost buck, quickly followed by the third and fourth, and our quarry, though desperately hit and straining his every nerve, makes a gallant attempt to do the same.

We can see him to perfection now, and he is indeed a fine

fellow ! Splendidly handsome ! And such horns ! I feel dreadfully sad at his pain and distress, hesitating as he does for a moment on the edge of the marsh, then floundering in, his mates far out-distancing him as they plough towards the open stream. I however recall the zebra which I saw shot in the hind-leg on the Kafue flats. Its leg hung helpless, smashed in two places, but after a few seconds it went on quietly feeding. It has often comforted me, that memory.

"He refuses the marsh !" cries Cecil, "and . . . yes . . . by Jove ! He's coming this way."

Old hunters whom we have met on our wanderings have often told us of all antelopes to beware of the wounded roan. Hunters have been gored to death by them before now.

This cheering recollection comes to me as, our roan, furious and desperate, and cut off by the marshes from any other egress, makes for us, head down. And I next hear Cecil shouting to me to "Run" !

I need no second bidding. My small rifle is loaded, but at this supreme moment I realize that a carrier had it handed to him while I was crawling on Mother Earth, and that the same gentleman is now scooting away with it, intent on saving his own skin . . . and so . . . run I do. As I never ran before !

On comes the great animal, nearly the size of an English bull. His big head is down, his tail twirling in the air with rage, and we are right in his path. Towards the friendly cover of the bush I sprint. I never knew I could run so fast before !

I can hear the other carriers at my heels and all round me, and than I think . . . "Oh, what cowards we are," leaving Cecil, Milk, and Hymn-Book alone to face the infuriated animal ; and that thought brings me up short.

Foolish, for I can do nothing, and will only increase Cecil's anxiety, but there it is.

I stand and I look back, and feel . . . well, that I prefer to stay here, and share whatever comes.

I recall well the terrifying sight of that poor, mad wounded roan charging towards us . . . and Cecil standing very quiet . . . ready to receive him.

I forget my own safety now. . . .

A great reliance in that upright figure comes over me. . . . I am in the direct path of the animal, and could never get away now. . . . Yet all fear is gone.

All the same, as he got very close to his foe I had to close my eyes, for he looked in his death-fury the embodiment of blind hate and danger.

The next moment the shot that met him full in the shoulder rang out, and I opened my eyes to see him stand, for one instant, quite still . . . staring, motionless, staring in a strange way . . . full at his assailant.

Then he quietly, poor beast, walked forward two or three paces, his head down.

You would have thought there was suddenly nothing the matter with him ! He might have been about to graze. For all I know, such was his dying wish. . . .

One more step forward . . . then a pause . . . and he raised his face and gazed in front of him, as if bidding good-bye to the beautiful world. . . .

Then he crumpled up and fell like a stone, dead.

* * * *

There were tears in my eyes as I joined my companion, who stood looking down at the gallant creature with an expression on his face which I always see there at such moments . . . the strange regret, yes, sometimes, almost perhaps a kind of passionate pity, of the true sportsman, when he has obtained his desire

The roan was such a beauty that we decided not to have him, as is usual, cut up then and there by the carriers, but sent for the wagon so as to get him back to camp whole.

The poetry of the chase, which constituted a large part of my pleasure in it, is apt to be rudely jarred when, sitting at one's tent door evenings, large joints of raw meat are displayed to you after a kill as "the buck I got to-day," or "the fellow I ran three miles to finish off; come and see him," and you go, and all you find is a rustic butcher's shop hung to the trees.

I often evenings, waiting for Cecil to return from his hunt, wake the echoes of the woods singing "The Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman," that beautiful melancholy wail of passionate regret for the joys of the hunter's life.

*No more at dawning morn I rise,
And sun myself in Ellen's eyes.
Chase the fleet deer the forest through,
And homeward wend with evening dew.
A blithesome welcome blithely meet,
And lay my trophies at her feet.*

On arriving at this point, one feels certain that Walter Scott, poor man, would turn in his grave at the idea of "trophies" in the shape of large sirloins, legs, and saddles of buck being deposited at the toes of his Lady of the Lake?

So, to please me, we returned to camp with the roan whole on the wagon to show the others. His horns measured 33 inches on the curve, and his glossy "strawberry" skin was a beauty. I am sorry to say that the photo I got of him was spoilt in developing.

A few days later our riverside camp knew us no more. Failing to obtain a kudu (we had one exciting stalk) Cecil, after a long discussion, took a few servants and went off to a spot where they were said to abound, and not so wild

as here. We others departed for the opposite horizon, and he would rejoin us. This cost me some anxiety, but I did it to give him a better chance of kudu unhampered by all of us. "Lion-land" was the name we gave our next destination, for there lions abounded in such numbers that even traders refused to go there.

And so the Junga knew us no more.

For long years, perhaps, we shall be talked of by those simple people, leading their quiet uneventful lives in the supreme isolation of the African bush.

We came . . . we stirred their peaceful days a little . . . they learnt something . . . 'twas a breath from the world beyond . . . and they will, evenings, by little red log-fires, tell their children and grandchildren about us . . .

The children will doubtless ask when shall we return? and the reply will be, "They went to those far blue hills. . . There we have never been; but the lions there are cruel and many. . . They have never come back."

CHAPTER XLIII

“Don’t sleep in the open, any of you. I’ll join you, bar accidents, on the evening of the fourth day.”

We had divided up our retinue, and as Cecil waved us farewell through the forest into which he was bound, our wagon plunged into one of the usual plains of high yellow grass.

“We going,” said Hymn-Book, “into velly bad lion coun-tree now. He hunt, fourteen lion together, where we going. Aie! Aie!” And Hymn-Book shrugged his shoulders as if he gave up in despair the extraordinary tastes of English ladies and men who enjoyed risking being chewed up by lions instead of living comfortably at home in safe England or Johannesburg.

When should we see the Soldier Man again? Heaven above knew. For the shooting-party that parts ways in these wilds there is no method by which each finds the others again, except by tracking their “spoor.” No villages nor signs of humanity, black or white, lay in our path. We were bound for the very Edge of the World! It comforted me, as I sat on the top of the wagon, to see how we mowed down the ten-feet high grass. By that alone could Cecil find us again.

“I’ll join you, bar accidents!” A big “bar” that, in this great mysterious, Silent-Land!

Our wagon creaked along, hour after hour, and our ancient driver shouted in guttural accents to his team, who all had

ladies' names, though I never made out why, as all were gentlemen,—“Anna! Lil! Jemima! Rosalie! Git on!” (Crack!)

There was neither road nor track. We made our own.

About midday we arrived at a deep spruit and it didn't seem possible we could ever get down into it, much less get out again. Crash we went over the edge, first the sixteen oxen, then the heavily-laden wagon, and, as might be anticipated, at the bottom the whole affair overturned, and a solid hour was spent amidst turmoil indescribable. The heat was awful. Every one was bruised and in bad temper. When the wagon went over, I, sitting below the O'Flaherty, had hung on to his legs, and the Miss above had clutched his head, and now, amidst all the uproar of collecting our sodden possessions and doctoring cuts and bruises, he kept demanding had we two thought he was “made of cow-hide,” and asked it *so* often that I was finally driven to retort, “Not cow-hide, hippopotamus-hide.”

When we at last got out of the spruit, and proceeded on our journey, the O'Flaherty, much wounded, vanished with his gun-bearer into the long grass, and though we occasionally heard shots, the Miss, myself and the retinue on foot, were left to creak along alone.

In all our travels I had never seen buck in such numbers as on that day! They fed about in herds, or in twos and threes, and hardly noticed us. They had no cause to fear man. They evidently knew nothing of him. A sweet confidingness to-day made our passage through this zoological garden of Nature's making a pure delight. They seemed to know that no one in the party wished to harm them.

About noon the great silence was broken by birds twittering, a sure sign of water. Ahead of us the yellow grass broke, and a line of trees, green and humid-looking, told us of a river and shade for our midday meal.

We were seated having it, and hoping the O'Flaherty would soon turn up, when down the steep shady bank under which we rested by the stream, he came panting and tearing, almost unable to speak.

"Lions! Lions! Three of 'em! I ran into 'em in the long grass! They are close by now."

To our feet we sprang in wildest excitement, and hearing shouts and screams from the servants above up the bank we all tore, followed by Big Ben, our table-boy, who had been waiting on us. No one knew where the lions were, and whether any minute we should not perhaps run straight into them.

Arrived at the top we found utter confusion and terror prevailing. Half the retinue was struggling to climb the wagon for safety, while the driver and voorlooper and about twenty other servants and carriers clung frantically to the oxen's heads to prevent them stampeding, they being as terrified, poor beasts, as we were.

"What! Where! Where are the lions?" shrieked the Miss, running also to climb the friendly wagon. "Lord have mercy upon us and incline . . . that is to say, where are the lions?"

"There!" bellowed the O'Flaherty, swarming up the wagon-wheel and getting on to the high piled-up top of our numerous possessions, rapidly loading his rifle as he did so, "there! See?"

And he bent down and pulled me panting to the top beside him, and I stood there and realized that the dread King of the Wilderness was again close to us, and visible clearly to me for the second time.

How often at nights, sleeping in the vast and limitless open beneath the stars, had we heard his great voice, sometimes near, sometimes far. How often our little party had stood, awestruck and silent, to gaze at his deep footmarks, passing the very doors of our tents while we had slept!

But though on that awful night, now some months back, we had been doubtless very near death, we yet had never, all together, beheld our enemy till now.

I held my breath. . . . The Miss, her pretty placid blue eyes alive with terror, continued to murmur suitable portions of the Litany about battle, murder, and sudden death. . . . And the O'Flaherty pointed to the long grass stretching away below us like the sea when the sun yellows it.

"See him? And the two lionesses?"

Yes, I see him, and will never forget the sight. You, who can only behold him pacing restlessly behind caged bars, can never know the strangeness and awful beauty of him out under God's blue sky, in his own wide native land.

A large lithe tawny body and great head and swinging tail, creeping, creeping through the wide grass sea, grass to the blue horizon, not towards us, but away from us, as fast and noiselessly as he can. At his heels his two wives, long, lissom, cruel-looking creatures, somehow far crueller-looking than their lord. All three lions are obviously striving to avoid us. The lion is only a danger when he knows *you* don't know he's near, or when he is wounded. The dear old idea of the courageous lion receives a shock, as it did to me at Dem River, welcome though his departure then was. Yet the very sight of them, and the knowledge of their treacherous ways under cover of darkness, makes me tremble as I rapidly reflect to-day, "And in this delectable region we have to sleep in mere tents! Shall we ever emerge alive?"

The O'Flaherty now made ready for a shot at the departing lions, much to mine and the Miss's terror.

"No! No! You mustn't, you sha'n't!" and she seized his arm. "You know how dangerous a wounded lion is!"

"Oh, lor', don't ask me to lose such a chance!" shouted he, struggling to free himself, "I must! And I shall! *Let go!*"

At the first shot all three lions stopped dead short, and

I fancy the fifty-odd hearts of our little band of humans stopped beating entirely for a second or two. If wounded, an attack was imminent, and the O'Flaherty evidently realized his rashness, for he turned pea-green. A large party of panic-stricken servants and two women looked to him for succour if anything happened, and only one rifle loaded between the lot of us !

For one horrid moment we feared the foremost lion *was* wounded, for he turned and made a great snarling face at us, and his two wives immediately made ugly faces too. Even in Rowland Ward's window a snarling lion inspires a feeling of awe, but when you're in the open with him, and the next minute he may be on your back or head, a congealed sensation in all your veins is the paramount sensation.

"I am going to faint," announces the Miss.

"So am I," comes from me. And from the O'Flaherty,

"If you, do, we're done for."

That pulled us together. . . .

We all clung to each other, the wagon swaying, for the poor oxen were plunging frantically. . . .

I will never, never forget my thankfulness and the almost moan of relief that went up from us all, as me-lord lion, after contemplating us disgustedly for a few moments, broke into a swinging canter, and, followed by his harem, plunged into the grass ocean, while we, from the wagon, watched their progress for a long while through the swaying grass. Below us the servants yell and shout, and it is plain the danger is over *pro tem*.

Not so, however, the fear. That we are in extra bad lion country is evident.

Hymn-Book gives it as his opinion that we shall all be "skoffed" to-night, "skoff" being Dutch for food.

Off the wagon we climb, trembling, and the Miss and I sink full length upon the ground.

"There! There!" murmurs the O'Flaherty, who has rushed for water from the stream and now kneels pouring it over us with swishes as if we were flower-beds. "There! There! Come now! A miss is as good as a mile, and better!"

"But it's to-night!" I murmur, "it's evident we are in the thick of lions. If they walk about like this in broad sunlight, what will it be when night comes on? And we have to pitch our tents out in this wilderness!"

"And only *you* to protect us," says the Miss in withering accents. "You should never, never have brought us here," she adds with closed eyes.

"But, lor' bless my soul!" cries the O'Flaherty, desperately, mopping his brow, "you were both mad-keen on coming *because* of the lions! What utterly unreasonable kittle-kattle women are!"

Neither the Miss nor I know what sort of beast kittle-kattle may be, but we both feel insulted.

"It was your place," I remark, "to know we should be frightened, and to refuse to bring us into this benighted region."

"By gum!" says the O'Flaherty, "but this will be a lesson to me."

"Let's hope it will," says the Miss, still extended on Mother Earth. "But" (to me) "we must not be too hard on him. He is a man. He wanted a lion-skin. What were *our* skins in comparison?"

But the O'Flaherty has bounded to his feet. I never saw such a deep purple colour as his face turned. He strode away, muttering something or other under his breath that sounded most unpleasant.

"I heard him!" says the Miss, sitting up, "and he said, '*damn all women!*'"

* * * * *

About 5 P.M. we reached the Mombesi River. On a high

green hill the other side, stood a small lonely kraal. What it was doing, dumped down here in this lion-infested wilderness, no one knew. We decided to camp up on the hill, as being safer than the grass plain, and we had a dreadful business trying to find a suitable spot at which to cross the river, simply infested with crocodiles, and darkness rapidly coming on, for it was still not quite summer time and the sun set early.

The whole kraal from above trooped down to help us across, and after a noise beyond description, and deep anxiety on the part of every one who had to stand up to his waist in the water to help get the wagon out of the mud (the induna in safety on the opposite bank cheering us on, as it were, with the ever-reiterated remark, "Take care, my brothers, of the wily croc," or so it would be, translated), we emerged safe the other side and were escorted up the darkening hill by a jabbering crowd.

"Have you many lions here?" inquired the Miss, of the induna, Hymn-Book interpreting, and the reply came, "Velly big, bad, strong, lions here; short while since, one half induna's brudder eaten by lion."

"And what became of the other half?" asks the Miss; as if that mattered.

"Other half," said Hymn-Book, after inquiries from induna, "a hyena finish."

"This is nice," says the Miss, through the gloom, "a charming spot, truly!"

We are passing the little kraal now, lonelier and more sinister than any kraal we have yet seen in our travels, for a high thorn fence for lions is built round it, and at nights the inhabitants creep through one small hole in the thorn, and then close it up again. Our camp has perforce to occupy the cheerful position of being outside this grim barrier.

The sun is setting over the edge of the plain below. There

is barely time to get the tents pitched ere night will be on us with all its nameless terrors, sounds and mysteries.

The villagers have made obeisance and departed and are safe in their fortress for the night. We talked of asking to be allowed to sleep there too, but decided that the vermin and the smell would be on the whole worse than the lions.

We all stand and gaze at each other, and for the first time since I left London, I remarked out loud (what I had occasionally only thought before) :

“ I can't imagine why I came on a shooting trip in Central Africa. I would give anything to be safe in my London flat.”

* * * * *

During the days and nights that ensued, the nights one long fear, we often thought of safe, snug London flats with almost despair. Would any of us ever return again to civilization ? It really seemed improbable.

The lions wandered over the land in such numbers that, knowing they were all round our camp, and hearing them all night in different directions, it seemed a mere toss-up who would get taken first. No one slept much, if at all. Our three tents we pitched all in a bunch, doors to doors for safety, and oh, the curdling horror of lying awake hour after hour listening to a twig crackling outside, strange horrid breathings under the flaps, and recalling the many terrible stories of men dragged from their tents and huts at night that we had heard so often told by camp-fires during our travels. I was sure my little dog Jane, loved most dearly, would get carried off. I tied her to my tent pole, and when, often, in the long and silent hours, a low and ominous growl would break from her little throat, all the terrors of death itself assailed me, and I longed to be gone from the place.



CHAPTER XLIV

WE remained on that lonely mountain top, vainly waiting for Cecil, who came not.

As the days passed, our anxiety about him grew. *What* had happened to him? We knew that there were many things might have happened to him, and I wished I had not consented to this going of different ways. I had had something of a feeling against it when it was first suggested at the Junga Village. But all through our wanderings it had been my aim to suppress my fancies as much as I could when they would have stood in the light of our two sportsmen enjoying the sport to which they had so keenly looked forward upon our travels. Cecil said he would get a better chance of his longed-for kudu head without us, because if one place proved a failure he could pack up and be off to another so much more easily when his "pack up" only meant his one little Whymper tent, a blanket and a saucepan, for that was literally all he had taken with him, so as to move "light."

Hour by hour as the days passed and we scanned in vain the plains below us, did we sit and talk of what his prolonged absence meant. I look back now with anything but pleasure at our sojourn upon that Mombesi Hill in "Lion-land."

For nothing more utterly desolate, and removed from all that makes the world, "the world" at all, can be conceived! A bare ugly mountain rising sheer out of the plain of grass—grass—grass. So far as eye could see, nothing but grass, save where, upon a dim horizon, the dark smudge of forests

lay. Somewhere, away there, roamed the cause of our worry.

I was quite aware that he might be after some coveted buck, and nothing for us to trouble about at all. But in that case we believed he would have sent a carrier to find us with a note. It was the silence we couldn't understand. He might have fallen ill, and been abandoned of his servants, who have a nice way if you are unconscious of seizing all your possessions and bolting.

However, I knew what the Soldier Man was when he was a-hunting. All else was forgotten.

"I am not going to worry too much, for if he is after buck he doesn't deserve it, and if he has come to grief I will start to worry when I know," said I to the others, which sentiments met with the applause of the O'Flaherty, who was dull, and if Cecil's bones had been carried in, he would have had only one idea—to get at the lion which had done it. The very best of men are rather selfish creatures and no woman should worry herself too much about them if she can help it!

So I amused myself as best I could, mended clothes long needing it, went out a-shooting, visited the kraal and talked "suffrage" to the women, and strove to distract my mind from the thoughts that troubled it in spite of myself.

I read a great deal those days.

There was nothing new to read, but when you are in the wilds, even a much-read book goes a long way. I carefully avoided "Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs," which at no time had ever struck me as exhilarating, and I confined myself chiefly to poetry.

I perused one little gem so often that I can write it down now by heart. I discovered it in that breezy little magazine *The Tramp*, now, I am sorry to hear, defunct, which I found lying beside me as I rested in an impala chair at a desolate

farm, and I cut it out and kept it. Its name was (and I think it must refer to lovers in a caravan)

THE OUTCASTS

*You live in rooms, but so don't I ;
Friends may frequent where we are banned ;
Convention with forbidding hand
Drives Love beneath the sky.*

*Two homeless wanderers night by night,
Past many and many a home we tramp ;
While others rest by hearth and lamp
We learn the open-air's delight.*

*We pass and leave the homes of men,
We tread cool turf beneath the stars,
We hear the churring of night-jars,
We hear the bittern in the fen.*

*We know the silence of the woods
We know the secrets of the hills,
We know wide lakes and little rills,
And sky's innumerable moods.*

*We know wild places dew-impearled,
We know deep dells, and mossy dells,
We know the scent of heather-bells,
We know the beauty of the world—*

*Perhaps it was, that pondering this
The sweetness of his ways untrod ;
" Convention " even was made by God
To give us more than common bliss ? "*

There is something to the lover of freedom that sounds almost glorious in the name " Outcasts."

There is so little from which you may become an outcast that matters ?

An outcast ! To me it sounded lovely, and only as if heavy fetters, annoying and wearisome, might thus be got rid of ? To be cast out ! The very word seemed to me to breathe of honest fresh air and freedom, the daylight, the open, the truth.

Better surely, oh dear unknown caravan-lovers, be free to roam the world over, and your existence become so insignificant that it's no longer even worth while to abuse you, than be fettered with social obligations, obliged to tell polite lies, obliged to pretend things which you don't feel, and smile at the host you have always despised, obliged to eat when you're not hungry, to wear uncomfortable and fashionable clothes, to join in fact in all the big humbug and hypocrisy of Vanity Fair ? Outcasts from these ? Why not ?

* * * * *

A week passed, not to be forgotten for its dread of all kinds.

We dared not leave Mombesi Hill to go and look for troublesome Cecil. We might, in this lone trackless wilderness, so easily miss him altogether, and not succeed in meeting again for weeks.

There was naught to do but remain up there and—wait. Our white tents made a landmark plainly visible for miles. In addition, we rigged up a flagstaff, fastened high on to the wagon, and to it we fastened one of my sheets. It waved in the sun, and we really felt very like castaways.

How often, as a romantic adventure-loving child, had I played at "Desert Island." It was our favourite game, we sisters and brothers, and at that age no lot seemed to me more enviable than to be shipwrecked on an ocean island, accompanied of course with every need of life, and with one or two

charming companions such as generally fall to the lot of the shipwrecked heroine of the "Shipwreck Novel."

Well, this desolate bare mountain, upon which we were now forced to remain, eagerly scanning, as the days passed, every speck upon the grass ocean around, became to us very like some unknown island of the seas, and grew as irksome to us as any prison must grow, even when it is a beautiful prison, which ours was certainly not, though it had the charms of openness and nature like all else in this Edge of Beyond.

At night we fastened our largest camp-lantern, which had a powerful reflector too, on to our flagstaff, and sometimes we made the carriers take turns to stand on the wagon and wave it about, and up and down, always hoping that the Wanderer might be somewhere on that great black plain, trying with his followers to find us.

We also burnt fires of grass at night, so far as we were able. Of other fuel we had none.

We talked of sending the driver and some carriers with the wagon away to the bush on the skyline, to collect and bring back wood for fires, and to inquire, if might be they met any humans, whether anyone had seen or met the Baas' party? But we decided it would be too risky to part from our wagon, our one means of transport. We trusted not the driver one bit. He was a hoary old scoundrel and looked it. How sorry I used to feel for his wife, a mere timid child of seventeen, standing in deep awe of him, shouted at by him, used by him as wife and servant all in one and incidentally as the mother and nurse of his son. The Suffragette and Rebel-Woman in me was always up in arms when I beheld that *ménage*.

In addition to our doubts and worry as to what to do, we had the nightly anxiety about lions, leopards, and hyenas.

Their plenitude was apparent by the many beautiful skins

to be bought for a spoonful of salt or a yard of calico, which the natives daily brought us, and spread out round our tents to tempt us. And very tempting they were. If I hadn't been too preoccupied to almost look at them, I could have "laid in" such a fine collection. Leopard, lion, hyena, silver-jackal, otter, wolf, fox, tiger-cat, civet-cat. Also many horns. As it was, I sat and gazed almost unmoved at the display, spread out on the grass, but hadn't the wish somehow to bargain or buy. One lovely leopard skin its owner asked "one bob" for. It was such a beauty (and we have it now in our dining-room) that I roused myself to possess it, but realizing its value in England, I told the native I would give him "half a crown" for it. He stolidly refused. "One bob" was his price. Half a crown (all the creature caught was the word *half*) was, of course, a base attempt to swindle him. No "halves" for him. So I gave in, and said "Very well. One bob," and the skin became mine for that sum.

By day I wandered over our lone Pisgah, often with the O'Flaherty, who I fancy was not heart-broken at Cecil's absence, being of that happy ilk that must try and flirt with a woman if she has it in her to flirt. We laughed and talked and roamed about together, and never had the dear O'Flaherty been so marvellously attentive! I pretended not to notice it, but I did. The devoted way he barricaded up my tent against lions at night warmed my heart to him. He would take a solid hour over it, pegging it down all round, till not a snake could have crawled in. Cecil had usually been my especial cavalier in these ways, and the O'Flaherty seemed determined that not one attention to which I had become accustomed from the absent one, should now be lacking from him instead. We hunted together too, my little B.S.A. on my shoulder, and we brought back something every day for the pot. In places on the mountain the wild guinea-fowl ran about like chickens.

The Miss must have been a bit lonely I fear, but she was too good-natured to show it, and amused herself with long expeditions down to the plain with her gun-bearer, and she largely helped to keep the pot a-boiling. Our evenings were all spent together, the O'Flaherty carolling us songs, and one night we sent to the village with the announcement that a conjuring performance would take place, and we had a big audience. Of course, we pretended that the Baas really swallowed the billiard balls and the red, green, and blue pocket-handkerchiefs which afterwards multiplied inside him and took half an hour to draw from his mouth. He was a magician. And wide-eyed terror was on every face.

"Mastah stop it," advised Jonas in a whisper, "plenty trouble now if anysings nasty happen in kraal. Cow dic, locusts eat mealies, child go sick, girl born when must have boy, these peoples come kill mastah in his tent. His evil eye cause it. Induna saying now if Baas can make fifty gold sovereigns out of one, what for anyone want money in England? And he say mastah do same for them."

"Oh, lor'!" said the conjurer, "tell 'em the power's failed."

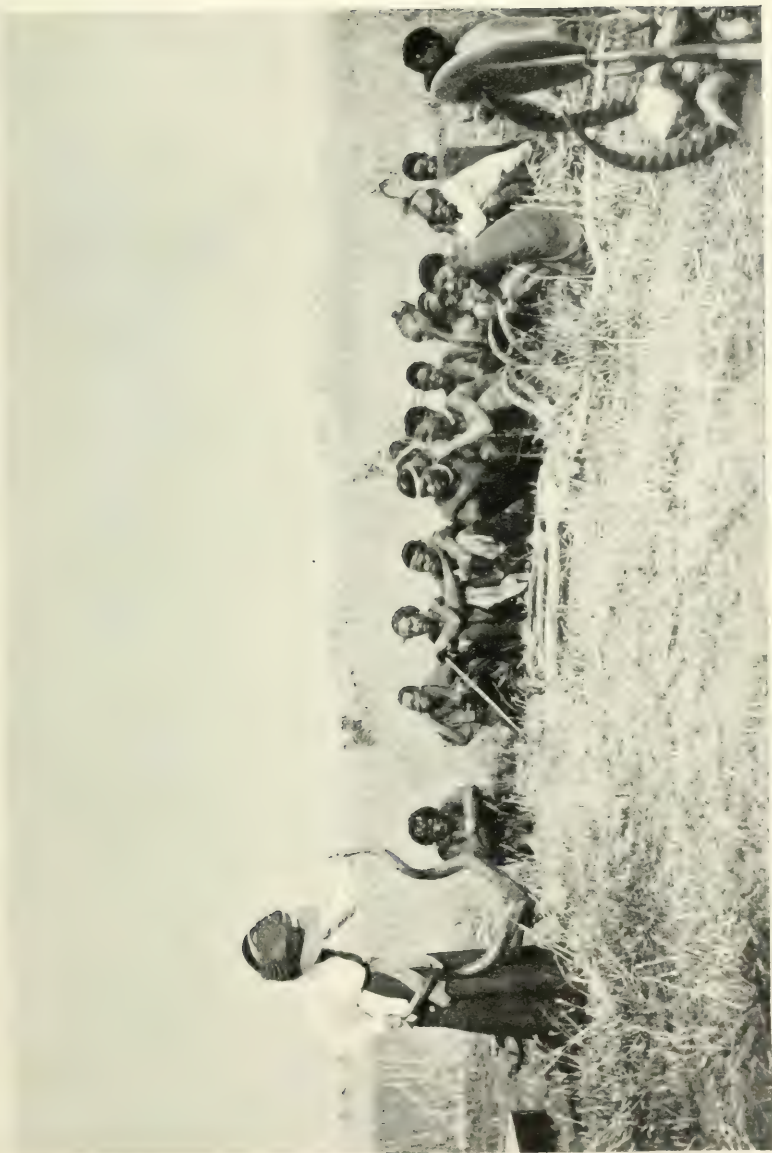
The crowd dispersed chattering hard, and we all fervently hoped that nothing would happen before we got safely away from Mombesi Hill.

The day after this, the O'Flaherty shot a magnificent pauw—a kind of buzzard, or African peacock. It was so fat and heavy it burst as it fell plump to earth. It must have weighed thirty pounds, and it had to be slung to a pole to get it home and it took us days to eat it up. And thus passed the time in various recreations and pursuits.

And yet no sign of the absentee.

Our nights were awful; veritably they were one long terror with the lions and the heat in the laced-up tents.

The boldness of the lions was almost incredible.



ON MOMBESI HILL. AUTHORESS AND KUDU HORNS

So soon as it got dark, the brutes started to prow! around our little unprotected camp. Some one of the servants generally took turns to keep awake and patrol, but sometimes they all slept, and there is no doubt that we should have arranged for a regular night-watchman who could have slept by day. All of us being new to this part of the country, and to this particular life, no one thought of it, and we were told, upon our return to civilization, that it was a miracle some one was not carried off.

I now spent a lot of my time seated upon a high pile of chop-boxes on our wagon, shading my eyes from the sun, and looking out, east and west, far and wide.

But the plain showed only the specks of game.

CHAPTER XLV

ONE night I dreamt that Cecil said to me that he was safe and well and on his way back to us. It was all so vivid. Many important things in my life have been preceded by prophetic dreams. I stood talking to the truant. He sat on a fallen tree-trunk in his khaki shirt and "shorts," and he asked me why we were so worried? Though I stood close to him, yet we seemed to be speaking to each other from a long way off. He said, "I am on my way to you now."

This dream occurred early in the morning. Who has said that morning dreams come true? Of course there was nothing really at all wonderful in this dream, for we all thought by day so often of his return. But as I awoke, feeling refreshed in a wonderful degree, I jumped from my bed, unlaced my tent-door and climbed over the pile of boxes with which the O'Flaherty barricaded me up by night against lions, and putting on a dressing-gown I stepped outside.

It was a lovely morning and the sun was rising over the low, level horizon.

Game was feeding in small, and one or two large, herds here and there, and far, far away, a thin short, black snake seemed to wind. It must be the Soldier Man and his followers! I rushed to the Whymper of the Miss and asked for her field glasses, for though you couldn't see much through them, they might help me. The Miss was very sleepy and told me to help myself and to "be sure and shut one eye," as evidently

the glasses had a strong antipathy (like the men of England) to allowing anything to be looked at with your two eyes (the man and woman of the State), the consequence being that the field glasses, like man-made Governments, registered everything out of focus.

I laid them down and found I could see better with two eyes and no glasses. The thin black snake was still visible, but quite impossible to say whether it was a string of buck, following each other in single file, or a party of natives, or Cecil and his servants. Anyhow it was a long way off, and in an hour or two the snake would be nearer and better seen.

So I called for my bath, and stood looking round me at the busy homely scene of our camp, and at where the servants sat round the camp kitchen fire, fed with twigs, dung, and grass, and our oxen, loosed, fed about in groups. The driver's young wife flirted with a good-looking carrier, who naturally was pretending to be deeply enamoured of the funny little squat-faced baby tied to her shoulders in an impala skin. The driver was safely down at the river, performing his morning ablutions, and Hymn-Book, who was standing near them, on being asked by the O'Flaherty (who had now also emerged in pyjamas from his tent) what the couple were talking about, informed us with charming unconcern that Mrs. Driver was remarking what a happy day this would be if a crocodile down in the river-reeds took a fancy to her spouse and either swallowed him whole, or even took part of him, because then the other part “ soon die.”

I laughed aloud as I went back to my tent where *chota hazaree* stood hot on a table, and we all collected and drank it.

The morning passed, and I spent some of it, having a good place cleared and got ready for Cecil's tent, and then I ordered an extra good dinner and lunch; and then I wrote up my diary; and then I darned my stockings; and then I wrote a letter

home ; and then I realized the sun overhead was at midday—and no black snake any longer visible upon the plain. . . .

It was a dreadful shock. I climbed on to the wagon and gazed around.

Even the herds of game had disappeared ; gone to seek the shade of the long grass or bushes and have their midday siesta.

The snake must have been game after all, or else natives journeying away from us. I climbed off the wagon and informed the others of the news.

Lunch-time came, a most tempting one. All the delicacies from the chop-boxes. But no Cecil, and the afternoon passed away. Then the shadows of evening began to fall, and soon another night was upon us.

The servants banked up the fires, Big Ben lit the lamp and hung it to our flagstaff—and I heard the O'Flaherty telling the Miss in low tones that it was no use our stopping on this "infernal lion-infested hill" any longer. "Something must have happened. We'd best start to-morrow and try to find him."

It was quite dark now, and I stood listening. They didn't know I was near. The stars powdered the velvety sky so bright to-night ! Somewhere under them was the Wanderer. . . .

At that very moment, a single shot rang faintly out from the plains below. . . . A long, long, *very* long way off, . . . but a shot . . . and who could it be but Cecil ?

We all gave a cry . . . all the servants started to their feet too. "Mastah coming !"

"Quick !" said I to the O'Flaherty, running to him as he stood at his tent door, "answer back ! He may not know where we are !"

Soon, our reply rang out sharp and clear through the warm night. Three shots—with a pause between. . . .

And then back came the answer, three shots in quick succession.

After that, about every fifteen minutes, another shot was fired on both sides, and as they grew nearer and clearer I called Hymn-Book and told him to collect carriers and take the big lantern and go down and cross the river and meet the Baas, as otherwise he would never find the drift, which, even in daylight, was hidden in rushes and bushes and very hard to find indeed.

Hymn-Book departed, but soon returned to say not one carrier would go. "Too much lions, Missis."

In vain the O'Flaherty went hotly for them, shouted to them to do as they were told "or go to Hell."

They all preferred to go there. For about one hour the altercation went on, the O'Flaherty with a stout stick, chasing first this carrier, then that one, till every single one had bolted into the darkness, probably to the kraal for safety.

It was now evident that Cecil and his party were arrived down below at the river, but couldn't find the drift. The howls and cat-calls of his carriers floated up to us, and now and then he fired another shot. The river, though narrow, was of unknown depth in most places, and swarming with crocodiles, to say nothing of its tall rank reeds, growing along its banks with forest-thickness, forming a splendid lair for sleeping and crouching lions.

Finally, the O'Flaherty, the Miss, and myself, Hymn-Book, and Jonas (the latter whining and shaking with fear) wended our way with lanterns down the lonely mountain-side to the drift, shouting to the Soldier Man that we were coming. The moon had not yet risen, and it was most nervous work and we started at every sound or rustle.

However, we thought we knew the right path to the drift, and we kept very close together, and now and then the

O'Flaherty fired off a shot to frighten anything noxious, and cheer poor Cecil out there on the plain in the dark. Arrived at the river we found we had lost our way, and couldn't find the drift at all.

Guided by the yells of Cecil's retinue the other side, we soon got opposite them, and glad greetings were exchanged across the water.

"Oh, Cecil! we have been anxious about you."

"I feared you would be! All well?"

"Oh, yes. And you?"

"Quite well. Delay was, going after kudu from place to place."

"Got one?" shouted the O'Flaherty.

"No, worse luck. Followed one for two solid days, wounded, but lost him."

"Why didn't you send a messenger?" I asked.

"I did, and the fool came back and said he couldn't find you. I was in a nice stew when I heard that, and, of course, I started to join you at once."

"He never tried I expect. Oh, it has been so wearisome here. But I'm glad you are back. This is an *awful* place for *lions*."

"So they say. And how about crossing here? Is it deep?"

"Oh, yes, very. You can't cross except by the drift, and we have lost it."

"Ware of the crocs, old chap!" shouted the O'Flaherty; "don't put so much as a foot in."

It was lucky it was a warm balmy night, for we were down at that river till the moon rose, about 2 A.M.

We sat on one bank, having cleared the growth, and Cecil sat opposite, and we conversed, and Cecil and the O'Flaherty lit their beloved meerschaums; the two red points of light shone on each side, and you must understand that deep as

it was, the river was very narrow here, running between steep high banks, and so we were only a few yards apart.

The prodigal related us all his adventures and we told him ours. He had wounded a magnificent kudu with wonderful horns, but had to leave it to its fate in the end.

So we sat on and talked, keeping fires burning for lions. Now and then a heavy movement in the black water showed that a crocodile was interested in our conversation, and we waited for the moon to rise and show us the drift.

When at last she came up over the dark hill, she lit up, not only the river, but our faces, and Cecil's shone out at us, suddenly materialized, and looking almost spiritlike. Out of our reach it palely shone, and he peered at ours, and we all smiled in the gladness of our hearts.

"Come, Christian!" said I, "there's your drift! It's a veritable Slough of Despond, but in you must go to get here."

"To get to the Land of Beulah," called he. "All right, here goes!"

"The Pilgrim's Progress" never beheld such a scene as that crossing, though. Even "Christian" nearly swore!

We leaned forward and pulled him up the bank, and in all the noise and turmoil no one had the heart to scold him for all the worry he had been the cause of.

"The Hill Difficulty comes next," said I, "but up on the top" (laughing) "is the House Beautiful,—and a royal spread!"

As we all climbed the bare and ugly hill upwards to our camp on the summit, some strange change seemed really to have taken place in it, so glad were we at the idea of soon now leaving it. The rough path was all moonlit. The way was become easy. No stones hurt our feet. Thousands of little stars seemed to have been hung out for us overhead by angels, as lamps to show the road to the top! The whole earth

and firmament felt like our very own, and as we all stood, to rest, and looked up at the quiet sky, the very stars throbbed, and some few, changing their colours, seemed to say to us (strewn like primroses over the mead), "Can't you come up and pick us? Well then, hold out your arms and we will drop into them!"

CHAPTER XLVI

It was impossible to get away from our lion-infested hill for another day or two, for now Cecil had an attack of fever, partly brought about by days of careless exposure to the sun, during the quest of that elusive royal kudu of which to this day he so feels the loss.

I and the others nursed him. He was not very bad, but he had to keep quiet.

By night, one or other of us sat up in turns with him, and one night (or so we were told by Jonas, who appeared never to slumber at all) a lioness was close to the tent where I sat near the sleeping invalid.

A great "rumpus" from Jonas and his brudders told me that something was the matter outside. But really, we were all getting so accustomed now to these night visitors, and I was so sleepy, that I didn't seem to much care! In vain had the Soldier Man demanded that no one should sit up with him. We insisted on doing so in turns.

On the night the Miss sat up, a hyena arrived, and we could hear it laughing not far off. But the Insular Miss had become as Rhodesian as the rest of us, and sat armed with a rifle and a hammer, ready to use whichever seemed best, and so dauntless had Mombesi Hill and its terrors made her, that I lay, quite expecting to hear a crash which should scatter the hyena's brains far and wide should he attempt to even peep in.

On the fourth morning Cecil was up and quite well again.

The O'Flaherty (who had been having long confabs with the induna and his subjects, all seated in a ring on the grass, and what was up I could not think, and he would not tell me) now suggested that we remained on in this dangerous spot in order to get up a lion-hunt with the natives !

" We shall never get such a chance again. Come now, Mrs. Suffragette ! Show your pluck ! There's one thing I *will* say for the Suff's," proceeded our friend artfully, (laying the jam gently on, with a side glance at me), " they've got the pluck of the Devil himself ! Ahem ! "

And the Soldier Man and he looked hard at each other.

" It's wonderful ! " added the O'Flaherty (no one responding to this call), " don't you know, the way they go to Holloway Gaol, with a ' Right oh ! ' and a ' Cheer oh ! ' smash their cells up to smithereens, and engage in tussles three times a day with four doctors and as many wardresses, and all for their faith. I don't approve of it all—but pluck ! I'd never have believed our English women had it in 'em ! "

" Lions are *so* different," said I, feeling some remark was required of me and wishing the O'Flaherty would stop his nonsense and palaver ; " life up here at night is not worth living ! I might be ready to do it, if it *was* for a faith. Dear Militants, I love them ! But you men have had a lot of fun and sport, goodness knows, and haven't the Miss and I followed you neck and crop into everything ? I'm sure you can't accuse us of want of pluck, simply because we are sick of sleeping in laced-up tents these hot nights with the fear of death in one's heart—and such a horrid death too—being carried off and scrunched up. And I don't suppose you'd get a lion in the end."

" No," said Cecil suddenly, " I don't think we ought to stop, O'Flaherty. Our two ladies *have* been wonderfully plucky. We must consider them now, and if they are (and

very naturally) tired of this spot and its undoubted dangers, I am for leaving to-morrow morning.”

And so it was decided, and the O’Flaherty accepted it with a good grace.

We still had a long way to go, for we had decided, ere our travels should be over, to penetrate the lonely country still ahead of us, and where, we heard, our sportsmen might expect to find rhino and buffalo, which so far we had not encountered. And so the camp was in much bustle all the rest of the day, for our stay on Mombesi Hill had been so prolonged that much unpacking had been done, and for a mile the place was strewn with our possessions.

The villagers, hearing of our departure, trooped to our camp, and set up an awful howling, some of them plucking out their hair to denote their grief at the loss of us. It later transpired that the O’Flaherty, still grieving over his lion-hunt, had told the induna that I had a soft heart, and was also easily flattered, and could I be induced to believe that the whole village had fallen in love with me, the lion-hunt might still possibly come off.

But he was nicely sold, for I remained unmoved, and after half an hour of it I asked Hymn-Book to “stop the noise or I should go mad.”

“The induna says,” remarked the O’Flaherty, wandering restlessly about near me as I knelt packing my photographic apparatus, “that you are the *most* beautiful woman he has ever seen.”

“I dare say,” I replied coolly, rolling up my exposure-frames in a bit of flannel, “I must look lovely compared to the women *he* is used to. And I heard you telling the Miss the same thing.”

“Damn,” muttered the disappointed one to Cecil, moving himself off in despair, “you simply can’t get round a woman nowadays. It’s all this infernal Suffrage! Once upon a time

you only had to tell a woman she was radiantly beautiful, and lor' bless you ! if she'd a squint and a hump on her back she'd do just whatever you asked her after that."

" Flattering for us ? " said I to the Miss, washing her hair close by on the grass, " but it's as well to know these things."

The day passed, and I took one or two photos. One was of the Miss washing her head (a snap-shot unawares) and another of the O'Flaherty (completely restored to good humour) having his hair cut with grass-snippers by the Insular Miss, who offered to do it, her packing being finished.

She declared she knew how. " She had often clipped her poodle."

Whether this was meant as a gentle return of compliments, I don't know, but the O'Flaherty wisely received it light-heartedly, and sat himself down at his tent-door for the operation.

It lasted half an hour, and he emerged from the Miss's hands, his head bare as a convict's, and every bit of good looks temporarily gone. He stood holding up a looking-glass, and his countenance fell to zero. The Miss moved away, remarking quietly, " *That* will settle him for a month or so."

" I say, Britannia ! This is beyond a joke ! "

" I thought you wanted it short ? " said she, from her tent-door. " That's how I always do the back-half of my poodle."

" *Dash* the back-half of your poodle ! *I'm* not the back-half of your poodle ! "

" It will soon grow again," said I, soothingly, " and the ladies with humps and squints are more likely now to do your bidding, because you won't seem quite such a god to them."

Certainly our jovial friend was much disfigured, and the only event that at all cheered him up was at tea-time, when the Miss, admiring the leopard-skin loin-cloth of a native standing near, called to the man and asked him if he'd sell it to her.

"But certainly!" said the creature (unclothed but for the loin-skin), and before anyone could stop him, he pulled it off and presented it to the Insular Miss, and stood unclothed.

"Tell him . . . thank you . . . I'll send him a shilling . . . later on. . . . He can *go*," murmured our Insular One, burying her pink face in her cup of tea, while the O'Flaherty shook in his chair and rocked himself backwards and forwards.

"Never mind, Britannia dear," he added, when the man had vanished, aided by a kick from Hymn-Book, "think of 'My Jottings'! Lor' bless you! I see the interested faces at home when you tell 'em! Mind and have eau-de-Cologne and fans all ready! Why not produce it on the Village Cinematograph?"

And now our last night on Mombesi Hill in Lion-land falls softly down, and we sit talking far into the night, early though we have to rise on the morrow.

Our long journeyings are approaching their end. The month of October is fast coming on, and every day, every hour now, the weather grows hotter. It is time to be going south.

To-morrow we trek into wilder country than we have even seen yet in this Land of Silence. Ten days more shall we journey onwards, and then, by another route, will our steps turn, back to Kafue River.

No one even knows what we shall all do when we get there.

We have now seen no letters for many a long day, and for each of us the future lies more or less unknown, until we once more reach comparative civilization.

The O'Flaherty is so fascinated with the country and the life, that he talks of buying a farm near Kafue River and settling down there, mending his wild ways, and making a fortune in cotton and potatoes.

The Insular Miss must be thinking of tracing her steps homeward.

Muddlethorpe will give her a royal welcome, says Mamma. Triumphant arches are already talked of, a band at the station, and lectures upon her travels at the winter spelling-bees—to finish with a collection for providing the “Cannibals with combinations” or some such charity. The anti-Suffragettes are also badly needing her services, and hope she is prepared to draw enthusiastic audiences with descriptions of how much happier and better-off women are, when they are kept well under, as in the case of the savages.

We did not get to bed till two that night, we had so much to talk of.

The next morning, as the sun rose, another long black snake wound itself away over the plain—our Safari.

Not many more of them should we know, these strange wanderings farther, and yet farther, into the wide-world places!

Not many more sunsets and sunrises seen from white tent-doors. . . .

It would be time, very soon now, to turn our faces back, and wend our way to whence we came. . . .

The bird of time

Has but a little way

To fly—and lo! the bird is on the wing!

CHAPTER XLVII—AND LAST

LONG and patiently have you followed us in our wanderings. And now behold us once more back at the blue Kafue River, back on our old camping-ground, and everything just the same as if we had never been away at all.

Life is very uneventful beyond the Zambesi, in all ways as we would describe eventfulness in England. Few posts; no papers; no telephones, telegrams, tubes, motor-buses, or theatres; no scandal, society, shops, hooligans, strikes, Insurance Acts, and Parliamentary hysteria.

But what a full thing is life up here all the same! How much more really full than at home! It is life indeed!

The feeling that we four had, after our adventures and travels together, was, that we had never properly lived till we did this trek together, and would never properly "live" again until we returned to this same life, should it ever be our happy fate to do so.

At least, that was what two of us felt very keenly, *i.e.* the Soldier Man and I. It appeared, having read our piles of accumulated letters, that to civilization we two must hie back—for a while. The call of the wild we had answered. Now came other calls, affecting lives besides our own, and matters to be seen to that could not be conducted from this utterly tucked-away Back of Beyond, dear to our hearts as it had grown.

The Miss we regarded with commiseration. She had to

return to live at Muddlethorpe-on-Sea ! I doubt if she felt as sorry for herself as we felt for her, for even Muddlethorpes hold consolations when you can brace yourself up and squeeze your soul once more into the little Muddlethorpe tubes of life. But I could see that the squeezing was going to hurt. But the Insular Miss had pluck enough to be a Suffragette. She is lost, thrown away, as an Anti ! May she soon realize it. She is far too good and sterling a woman to make one of that strange band of beings engaged (in a very half-hearted way, it must be confessed—and no wonder—and having to be spurred on everlastingly by politicians) in trying to keep women down. Misguided, hoodwinked women ! Can you not feel the iron hand inside the velvet glove that no doubt now smooths life temporarily for you (to keep you quiet and make you believe all is well for you) ? Can you not sense that iron grip, under all the velvet, that has kept you so long in bondage *and would still keep you there ?* Think of your girl-children, if you care nothing for yourselves. Life may not go so easy and smooth for them as it has done for you. Who shall say what awaits them unless you can awake quickly now ? Now, while your day is not yet spent and your night not yet here, awake, and be up and doing as we are, for you know—oh yes, you do know—that we are out for the right.

And so, on our long, weary, hot trek back to Kafue River, I talked oftentimes like this to our Anti, and somehow I believe that down in the depths, known only to herself, our Insular Miss returned to England so much less insular that even a sneaking love for the rebels of her sex (with all our undoubted faults) dwelt there, never to be driven out again.

It was a hot afternoon that our caravan, headed by our Soldier Man, once more appeared at little quiet Kafue River.

About two miles out, the stationmaster met us, and the ganger, and the "lonely farmer who lived in the dark." No



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"THE INSULAR MISS" CLIPPING "THE O'FLAHERTY'S" HAIR



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OUR LAST CAMP AND TROPHIES AT KAFUE RIVER

one had ever discovered his name, so that was how we had always designated him and always shall.

These, and other friends, came out to meet us, and that night we all dined together in our camp.

On our way back, we had stopped nearly a week at Lusakaas. Not at the little upland farm where the kindly Dutchman and his blue-gowned wife dwelt, but at Lusakaas Station, as the tiny shanty was called, a spot so appallingly windy all the year round that it is never really hot.

This was the only time on our travels that our tents simply could not be pitched, so fierce was the gale. I took a snapshot of mine being swept this way and that while the servants tried to get it up. Over and over again they were buried in it flat to earth, and finally the stationmaster (a man I liked much, he had such a sweet and gentle face) came up to us and offered us several empty guards' vans to live in while there.

"Tents won't stand up here," said he, "and will be very hot."

So into a row of guards' vans we went, and even they were nearly blown over several times. One was the kitchen, the others, bedrooms and sitting-rooms, and it was rather fun.

There was a tiny children's school at Lusakaas, kept by several Colonial and Dutch girls for the surrounding farmers' children. I can't think how they faced the life, for it had none of the compensations of ours. A mud house, swarming with white ants, which ate walls, furniture, clothes, and everything else; poor food at famine prices; intense heat coming on; practically no society, no pleasures, nothing! The pay given them (by the Educational Department) was cruelly insufficient, and they got but scant thanks or recognition from anyone for the heroism that had brought them there and kept them there. They could all have left.

for they all had homes in Southern Africa, and could have got posts there. But *some one* had to come here, and now they were here, they were trying to live it out.

This little tribute I feel I must pay to the brave little school-teachers of Lusakaas.

I think they were sorry to see the last of us. Their lives were very lonely !

The O'Flaherty made inquiries wherever we stopped, with a view to remaining in these parts and buying a farm.

"I could never live in England again. It gets into the blood—this life," said he, and when he reached Kafue he finally decided to buy land there. A young fellow called "Bobs" (apparently his only appellation), employed upon the railway and sick of it, offered to join him in the venture, and by day these two scoured the country surveying land. I don't know how you "surveyed" it, but it sounded all right. I know you had to pull up grass to see what the soil was like ; and on the evening before the train took the Insular Miss down South, the O'Flaherty and Mr. "Bobs" burst into camp upon us, full of a wonderful piece of land they had found for a farm.

"And where do you suppose it is ?" cried the O'Flaherty. "Why, at dear old Dem River where we camped, and where you, Mrs. Suff., got lost !"

"And have you quite decided to live there ?" asked the Miss. "Won't you be very lonely ?"

"Bless you, no ! Lonely ! With Bobs here ! And my gun !"

"I'd forgotten Mr. Bobs. Well, I am sure I wish you both good luck. And I almost wish I could stop with you."

And upon the selfsame spot where she had mistaken him, the morning she arrived, for an unwashed stoker who must be reported to the stationmaster for impertinence, the Insular Miss, "Bobs," the O'Flaherty, the Soldier Man, and

I, forthwith christened the O'Flaherty's new farm with Cape wine sent for to the little store, and an impromptu invitation with it to the store-man to come along with the bottle and help drink it and spend a last merry evening.

Not only did the store-man bring the Cape wine, but two natives behind him appeared, bearing other delicacies, long untasted; oranges, preserved ginger, sardines, tinned ham, and onions. The O'Flaherty fell upon the onions like a starving man and ate them raw, handing round large chunks, and when that course was finished the others followed; and the name of the farm was finally decided upon, after many suggestions from every one.

"What do you say," said its owner, who was by now in such high spirits that for twopence he'd have got on to the table and danced us a hornpipe, "to calling it 'Paradise Regained'? Eh? Rather jolly name?"

"My dear chap," said "Bobs," "you'll get called the 'Fallen Angel,' don't you know, for a cert. Won't do. We shall have nothing but jokes."

"Why not call it," said I, who, being Irish like the O'Flaherty, have, I suppose, the same wild ideas tinged with romance, "why not call it 'Back to Eden'? Don't you like that name, Cecil?"

"But I never *was* in Eden, so how can I go *back* there?" asked the embryo farmer. "It's a pretty name—'Back to Eden'—but to start with, there ain't no Eve."

"*I'll* be the serpent," said "Bobs" obligingly; "but certainly we shall want an Eve if we have that name."

"I know a really lovely name," said I, "I had a house in England called by it. It was 'Where the Bee Sucks.'"

"Where the *what* sucks?" asked the O'Flaherty.

"The bee, you fool," was my reply. "Don't you know, in Shakespeare :

*Where the bee sucks,
There lurk I ;
In a cowslip's bell I lie——?*

"Let me take it in," said the O'Flaherty slowly. "Of course, 'Where the Bee Sucks' should be a place smothered in flowers. Had your house a large garden?"

"Well, no, only a back-yard—but of course people passing made sure there *was* a garden."

"Oh, I see. But now, *my* place. We'll have to clear it to grow potatoes and mealies. There won't be a flower left and every bee will vanish. I'm sure potatoes have no honey in them, however hard you suck."

"That's true," said Bobs, "but you mustn't be too matter-of-fact, old chap. A romantic name goes a long way up here, and 'pon me word (beaming politely at me), I think I could be happy in a place called 'Where the Bee Sucks,' even if the bees were only hornets."

"But what about 'there lurk I'?" said the O'Flaherty, looking worried.

"But you don't write up 'there lurk I,' and you're not obliged to lurk, are you?—except when you're after game, and then it's quite appropriate."

"I don't quite cotton to it," said our friend, "I might as well call my farm 'In a Cowslip's Bell I Lie.' It's all too—too English, and rural. Make one home-sick. Cows in clover, pigs grunting, barns, haystacks, and things you don't get out here. No good to mix things up. I want a good old beyond-the-Zambesi-blackwater-fever sort of name. Something to make you sit up. Come, Mrs. Suff.!"

"Wait a bit," said I, "and I'll think."

"By Jove! But you've got it! You've just said it! What better name for an hospitable Englishman's farm

than 'Wait-a-Bit'? I like that. I think I'll have either that, or 'Killaloo,' eh?"

"I don't approve of a farm called 'Wait-a-Bit,'" said Bobs. "I'm superstitious, and a farm that's always waiting a bit, don't pay. If the potatoes wait too long they go mouldy, and the mealies run to only tassels. We're amateurs, we two, and we mustn't run risks of unlucky names."

After much chatter and suggestions on all hands, ranging from "The Huntsman's Rest" to "Sweet Waters," "Buck Lodge," and "The Chase," it struck me that, as the O'Flaherty and Mr. Bobs were confident upon making a large fortune in no time out of the farm, that "Tom Tiddler's Ground" would not be a bad name at all; and shouts of applause greeted the suggestion.

"There's luck in it too!" said the O'Flaherty. "Tom Tiddler's it shall be! And now, ladies and gents, please all fill your glasses and drink to my new venture—'Tom Tiddler's Farm'! Beyond the Zambesi!"

We drank it in Cape wine.

And then a silence fell upon us all. Far down in the forest a solitary reed-buck whistled its mournful call for some lost friend. To-morrow the Miss would be leaving us early. Three days later, and we would all be gone.

We had journeyed far and long in company. To part ways now was something of a wrench, so close together do people get when they are much thrown into each other's society in the wilderness. Some sort of familiar sweet halo surrounds each brow that you have seen beside you for so long, amidst events so uncommon as we had experienced. "Do you remember this?" "Do you remember that night?" "That day?" "That incident?"

Rousing ourselves, and the leaping light of the camp-fire upon our faces, and overhead the stars intensely brilliant, we harked back in memory, and talked our adventures all over

again—lived them almost again ! And we all thanked, and drank next the health of our Soldier Man, who had conducted and largely paid for the whole thing, and made such a success of it, and been so keen a sportsman.

That afternoon we had ranged up all the trophies of the trek and photographed them, with the "last camp" for background.

They made a goodly show, and included duiker, oribi, reed-buck, impala, wildebeest, letchwe, puku, hartebeest, roan, sable, water-buck, eland, wart-hog ; many fine skins, including zebra ; and birds cured and preserved, of different sorts. Through all our wanderings we had never seen one snake !—probably because it was winter.

Back to the beginning of our trek we went, and told our friends, new to it, of much we had seen and done. Beginning with our first lovely camp on the Zambesi, and all the beauty and wonder of that as a start, we passed on, and discussed, with many a laugh, and now and then almost a sigh, the things that had followed.

The Kafue Sahara ! The charm of that desert life ! The bush camps ; the Deserted Village and its lions ; the sweet Junga River ; the nightly Voice in the Wilderness ; the long hill sojourn in Lion-land ! And onward from there we had gone, and experienced much, and penetrated to the very edge of the world, as it were—and now were back once more, and about to part

And again silence, often meaning so much, fell upon us.

Faintly, in the starlight, glimmered close to our tables, sweeping away into the interminable forest, the silvered iron road of civilization, the railway that linked us out here in the wilds with the hum of life in the world beyond.

"What are those verses you are so fond of, Ethe ?" asks the Soldier Man out of the darkness, "a kind of farewell ?"

I was thinking of them ; and I spoke them aloud :

*Comrades, we have been long together,
Through pleasant and through stormy weather ;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh ? A tear ?
Then steal away, give little warning—
Say not good night ;
But in some other clime
Bid me Good morning.*

* * * * *

THREE YEARS AFTER

There are silent hours in my life when a clear Voice calls me—one that has called me before, but which now says, with far-off yet clarion tongue, “ Come back ! ”

You, who know it not, let me tell you—it is a Voice that is never stilled when once you have listened to it, have risen up and gone forth from your home, and left all behind, to follow it and obey it. . . .

Call of the Wild ! Leave me for a spell quiet and in peace !

And so replying, I listen. . . .

But it calls again and again, and because of it, I cannot sleep, I cannot always rest as I would, for, far off as it is, its call is clear :

“ COME BACK ”

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